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THOMAS PAINE: AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY OF THE
TREATMENT OF PAINE BY BIOGRAPHERS, HISTORIANS
AND CRITICS.

The University of New Mexico, Ph.D., 1977
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THOMAS PAINE: AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY OF THE TREATMENT
OF PAINE BY BIOGRAPHERS, HISTORIANS
AND CRITICS

BY

THE REV. FRANCINA KERCHEVILLE HAIL
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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History
in the Graduate School of
The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico
May, 1977

This dissertation, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of The University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THOMAS PAINE: AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY OF THE TREATMENT
OF PAINE BY BIOGRAPHERS, HISTORIANS

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This dissertation would never have been completed without the love and support of my husband and mother, whose faith in me was far greater than my own confidence in my ability. I will be eternally grateful for their loyalty and succor as I muddled through in the throes of "dissertation syndrome."

Finally, this effort is dedicated to Him whose promises are true and whose Word is inerrant and infallible.

Delight thyself also in the Lord;
and He shall give thee the desires
of thine heart.

Commit thy way unto the Lord;
trust also in Him; and he shall
bring it to pass.

--Psalm 37:4-5

THOMAS PAINE: AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY OF THE TREATMENT
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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The Rev. Francina Kercheville Hail, Ph.D.
Department of History
The University of New Mexico, 1977

The purpose of the thesis is to present a comprehensive annotated bibliography of the studies of Thomas Paine by American and British biographers and critics from the eighteenth century to the present. The individual treatments are analyzed as to their general comments and major emphases concerning the life, career, writings and influence of Thomas Paine. An effort is made to examine the tone, content and quality of each study. The author's objectives are noted, along with any pertinent or accentuated points of interest in interpretation. If in the process of investigating the enormous number of Paine treatments a significant pattern or trend in interpretation appears, this is discussed and analyzed in an attempt to achieve a fuller understanding of the man and his influence as elucidated by his many investigators.

The study is divided into ten chapters, which are devoted to investigating the treatment of Thomas Paine through his biographers, biographical sketches in encyclopaedias, biographical dictionaries, academic theses, articles and essays in books and periodicals, through historians and critical analyses of Paine's literary style, political and religious thought.

In conclusion, evidence of a standard appraisal or a model approach to the treatment of Thomas Paine does not develop. The key to a comprehensive overview of Paine scholarship is highly individualistic interpretation. However, certain trends in treatment appear that offer clues as to why there has been so little objectivity expressed in Paine studies until the present century. Because the variety of interpretation is tremendous, one explanation may be that Paine, as viewed particularly through the eyes of his biographers, is an enigma, a paradox, for no two writers view him in an identical light.

With this in mind, it is also stated that biographers and critics portray Paine, his character, thought and influence in the complexion relative to their own environment, experiences and personal prejudices. For example, the most vehement reactions against Paine through his religious treatise, The Age of Reason, occurred while evangelical revival and reaction to political radicalism was in full force in America and Britain. There are thirty-seven British and American replies to The Age of Reason that were printed in the short span of six years, 1794-1799. Also the most violent anti-Paine biographies were published during this same period through 1820.

As time passes and Thomas Paine's political, social and religious philosophy appear mild and almost conservative to the twentieth-century mind, a marked increase in objectivity results. Modern critics, for the most part, simply label him as a typical product of the Enlightenment. In the estimation of many twentieth-century scholars this great radical figure of the eighteenth-century revolutionary era, after 1795,

had outlived his usefulness and for all practical purposes was finished as a potent force in the international political arena. It may be added that an interesting by-product of this emerging objectivity is that Thomas Paine emerges a less fascinating figure as controversy and personal bias is generally eliminated from recent biographical and critical studies.

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PREFACE

There have been relatively few periods in American history since the late eighteenth century that the name of Thomas Paine has not brought forth reaction, sometimes of a violent nature. Whether praised or held in utter contempt, his name is indelibly impressed on the pages of this nation's chronicles. Paine's influence, whether positive or negative in its ultimate effect, has been international in scope, for he played an important role in the American and French Revolutions and even sought to promote one such in England.

In this past celebration year of the American Bicentennial, Thomas Paine was mentioned many times on television and in the American newspapers. Associated Press writer Don McLeod, honoring the Bicentennial years of the issuing of "Common Sense," wrote an article of approximately 1275 words under the title, "Thomas Paine Helped Unite Americans About War." This article appeared in newspapers throughout the United States as a part of a series commemorating American Founding Fathers and Revolutionary leaders. Fifteen days later the President of the United States, Gerald R. Ford, in his State of the Union Address before Congress referred to Paine and paraphrased one of his famous quotations from the pamphlet, "Common Sense."

A few weeks following the Address, on February 12, 1976, American historian Philip Foner replied to the President's recent

discovery of Paine's "Common Sense," and of the President's obvious misconceptions concerning the economic philosophy contained in that pamphlet with his own article appearing in The Daily World (New York City), entitled "From Thomas Paine to President Ford." By these few examples it can certainly be determined that the influence and memory of Thomas Paine still continue to be displayed in American contemporary thought.

There has often been evidence of an absence of objectivity when writing about this man and his philosophy. Since Paine's death in 1809 more than a few biographers, compilers and critics have portrayed him either as a noble revolutionary crusader or a contemptuous infidel whose name should be erased from the memoirs of mankind's history. The question must be raised why has there been so little objectivity expressed concerning Paine and his writings until the twentieth century? One answer may be that Thomas Paine, seen particularly through the eyes of his biographers, is an enigma, a paradox in rebel guise, for no two writers view him in the same light. Almost every biographer, disciple or antagonist, who has attempted to portray Thomas Paine naked to the world, has begun his opus with the pronouncement that Paine has been so misunderstood by everyone except himself. With this fact in mind it may be asserted that biographers have interpreted Paine, his life, character and influence in the complexion relative to their own times, experiences and personal prejudices. Therefore Paine has always been, in this sense, "understood." The issue seems to be that the illusive

Mr. Paine has rarely been captured in a purely realistic manner. The clear response is that generally the biographer or critic cannot fail to color the object of his study, the vehicle of his creativity. Thus while objectivity may be sought or demanded as the fulcrum of academic excellence, it is difficult to achieve even by the most perspicacious biographers. This has certainly been the instance with the "Lives" of Thomas Paine.

If one can detect a pattern forming which might in some way illuminate Paine's treatment by his biographers and critics, it may be stated in the following manner. Perhaps the pivotal point in the treatment of Thomas Paine is the acceptance or rejection of his religious philosophy as presented in his Age of Reason. In many cases, the biographer or critic, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, subconsciously either accepts or readily repudiates Paine, depending upon his individual beliefs in agreement or reacting to the prevalence of religious orthodoxy at that particular moment in history. Thus the spiritual climate can be a significant thermometer in evaluating the treatment of Paine. Thomas Paine, without question, aroused the wrath of Christians in both America and Britain with his Age of Reason, that literary crusade against the Bible as the perpetual and unique source of God's revelation to mankind. In the eyes of most orthodox believers everywhere he had committed the unpardonable sin and could never receive forgiveness without a complete retraction, and even that might not suffice to soothe their fury. They clamored, after all had he not crucified Christ anew and spiked the hearts of orthodoxy everywhere?

Meanwhile, if the direct reaction to Paine's Age of Reason might be determined ostracism, literary critics noticed an indirect effect in Paine's own ability to communicate through his writing. One thing is quite noticeable that up to the Age of Reason Paine wrote in a fairly positive vein. Being deeply influenced by deism and the humanitarian spirit so prevalent in his day, whatever he sought to destroy he recommended or replaced it with something better. However, from the Age of Reason onwards a somewhat negative disposition appeared in almost everything he wrote. For example, he attempted to destroy the Bible and its influence as the revealed Word of God, but in doing so he offered nothing truly significant to replace the vacuum resulting from the loss of the Scriptures.

The negativism, often subtle and elusive to all but the most discerning reader, intermixed with the unmistakable hatred and ostracism by most of his former friends and associates, did effect Paine, his public image and his influence in general. His position as a political philosopher, adroit and prophetic, was reduced to that of a "persona non grata." For all practical purposes, most authorities agree that Paine was finished as a potent force in the international political arena. After 1795 he had outlived his usefulness and spent his last days in a rather quiet, ineffectual state of disgrace.

In conclusion, the purpose of this interpretive study will be to endeavor to present a histographical account of Paine's treatment and evaluation by biographers, historians and critics from the eighteenth century through the present day. If a significant pattern

or trend in the treatment of Thomas Paine appears, this, too, will be discussed and analyzed in an attempt to achieve a fuller comprehension of the man and his influence, as interpreted by his biographers and critics, in American and British history.

CHAPTER I

A CAPSULE CHRONOLOGY OF THOMAS PAINE'S
LIFE AND WORK

The purpose of this first chapter is to introduce Thomas Paine in the light of the major events in his life as seen through the eyes of such biographers and compilers as Alfred Owen Aldridge, Harry Hayden Clark, Moncure Daniel Conway, Philip Foner and David Freeman Hawke.¹ The events, circumstances and general observations here recorded are in general accord with all the above-mentioned major Paine authorities.

It is necessary that some semblance of comprehension concerning Thomas Paine, his life and literary efforts be conducted at this juncture. Therefore this chronology in capsule form will endeavor to enlighten and provide an overview of those important highlights in his career and his influence as a revolutionary reformer in England, France and the United States of America.

1737. On January 29 at Thetford in Norfolkshire, England, Thomas Paine was born to a strong-willed father, an adherent of the Quaker persuasion, and a mother, an equally convinced believer in the tenets of the Church of England. He received his education at the Thetford Grammar School.

1750-54. At the age of thirteen Paine abandoned his formal schooling and began to work at his father's trade of staymaking. Three years later he ran away from home, joined the navy and served aboard

the privateers "Terrible" and "King of Prussia" as a common seaman.

1757. After three years Paine appeared in London where he applied his trade again as a journeyman staymaker. While there his interests led him to attend lectures of Newtonian astronomy, given by such eminent lecturers as Drs. John Bevis, James Ferguson and Benjamin Martin.

1759-60. In 1759 Paine moved to Dover where he set himself up as a master staymaker and opened his own shop. In September he married Mary Lambert, who at that time was employed as a lady's maid. After a short time he found himself bankrupt, losing his shop and possessions. He and his wife then moved to Margate, where after less than a year of marriage Mary Lambert Paine died.

1760-65. Paine returned to Thetford and undertook study for a new career, that of government service in the excise. He passed the excise examination, but did not receive an appointment until August of 1764, at which time he was assigned to the town of Alford in Lincolnshire. In July, 1765, he was accused of a violation of trust and was removed from the service.

1765-67. Paine returned to London and, not locating employment, was soon reduced to a state of extreme poverty. He was able after much persuasion to induce the headmaster of a private academy in London, Kensington School, to employ him as an English instructor.² Headmaster Gardiner kept him on staff in a teaching capacity until Christmas of 1766, at which time Paine was transferred to another school in Kensington where he taught for three months.

1767-68. During this particular period, Paine tried his hand at preaching "without regular orders" around Moorfields and the surrounding area. However, finding himself unsuccessful in this new venture, Paine petitioned the excise board for reinstatement as an exciseman. In February of 1768 he was appointed excise officer at Lewes in Sussex.

1771. Thomas Paine was married to Elizabeth Ollive on March 26, 1771, in Lewes and was given control over the family business, the Ollive Tobacco Shop.

1772. In Lewes Paine was chosen by the excisemen to address their grievances to Parliament. He wrote his first pamphlet, The Case of the Officers of Excise, as a convincing argument of the right and credibility of British excisemen to petition for higher wages. The winter of 1772-73 was spent in an effort to influence members of Parliament to grant the needed salary increase. Being in London at this time, he made the acquaintance of Oliver Goldsmith and other men of significant social and intellectual influence.

1774. On April 8, 1774, having been labeled a troublemaker, Paine was dismissed a second time from the excise service. Within a week he was forced to sell his shop and possessions in Lewes to escape imprisonment for debt. He was bankrupt once again.

In June Paine was legally separated from his wife Elizabeth. He returned to London where his friendship with Goldsmith was quickly renewed, and where he became acquainted with Benjamin Franklin. Wanting to go to America, he obtained from Franklin a letter of introduction. With it in hand, he left for America and arrived in Philadelphia

in November, 1774. Employment was speedily obtained with Robert Aiken, a Philadelphia printer and bookseller.

1775. Beginning with the second issue of the Pennsylvania Magazine, Paine became the official editor of this periodical owned by Robert Aiken. During the next eighteen months he published enough articles in this and other magazines to create a notable reputation in Philadelphia. His most famous essay at this early juncture in his literary career was "African Slavery in America," published on March 8, 1775. Other significant writings during this period were the poem "The Liberty Tree," published in the Pennsylvania Evening Post on September 16, and a short article, "A Serious Thought," published on October 18.

1776. On January 10, 1776, Paine published "Common Sense," which had a marked influence upon the movement for complete independence from England. In the following months, Paine published his Epistle to Quakers. The four Forester Letters which were direct replies to the colonial Tory, Rev. William Smith, were issued from March through May, 1776. In September Paine was appointed aide-de-camp to General Nathanael Greene, then at Fort Lee in New Jersey. He also played a part in the general agitation which finally produced a liberal constitution for Pennsylvania late in that year. "The American Crisis, Number 1" appeared in the Pennsylvania Journal on December 19, and four days later it was published as a pamphlet. (The final number in the series of "Crisis Papers" was published on December 9, 1783.)

1777. On April 17, 1777, Paine was elected by the Continental Congress as Secretary for the Committee of Foreign Affairs.

Interestingly enough, he was nominated from the floor by John Adams of Massachusetts, who later became vehemently outspoken in his condemnation of Paine and all he represented.

1778-79. During this period Thomas Paine accused Silas Deane, the American Commissioner to France, of impropriety and profiteering. Ultimately Paine was forced to resign his secretarial post on January 8, 1779. His literary efforts during this time were composed of letters and replies to such as the Congress, Silas Deane, Gouverneur Morris, Henry Laurens and others. On November 2, 1779, Paine was chosen Clerk for the Pennsylvania Assembly.

1780. In 1780 Paine joined with former foe Robert Morris to aid in the establishment of a "national" bank which later became the Bank of North America. Through the efforts of Benjamin Franklin Paine received an honorary Master of Arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania. The two outstanding pamphlets he produced in 1780 were "The Crisis Extraordinary" and Public Good.

1781. As a friend and private citizen Paine decided to accompany Colonel John Laurens, in the position of his secretary, to France to seek aid for the American cause. They arrived in L'Orient, France, in March, 1781. After a two and a half month effort, Paine and Laurens returned to America aboard the French frigate "Résolu," accompanied by two transports carrying military supplies and 2,500,000 livres. This welcome entourage arrived in Boston on August 25.

1782-83. Paine, experiencing the effects of financial difficulties, wrote numerous letters to prominent figures for some equitable solution to his plight. On February 10 Robert Morris, Robert R. Livingston

(newly appointed Secretary for Foreign Affairs) and General George Washington arranged for Paine to receive 800 dollars a year to write for the government. In August Paine published his reply, "Letter to Abbé Raynal," disputing the Abbé's misconceptions concerning the American Revolution. Paine also published during the year two of the very important six Letters to Rhode Island, defending the right of the Federal Government to tax that state. The final four letters in this series were published during 1783.

1783-84 After the war was over and the Treaty of Paris was signed, Paine's life seemed stripped of any useful purpose. He moved from Philadelphia to Bordentown, New Jersey, in the summer of 1783. With time to spare and boredom upon him, Paine's mind turned to worry about his dwindling finances. He wrote constantly to Washington and others, appealing to them for monetary compensation for his service to America during her Revolution. On June 16, 1784, the New York Legislature presented him with a confiscated farm in New Rochelle.

1785. In waiting for Congressional reply to his request for a pension or some form of financial reward for services rendered, Paine devoted his time to developing such inventions as an iron bridge and smokeless candle. Finally Congress rewarded him with a gift of 3,000 dollars on October 3. Earlier, on April 9, the Pennsylvania Assembly awarded him with a temporary recompense of 500 pounds.

1786. In 1786 Paine took a strong stand in defense of the bank in Pennsylvania. His pamphlet Dissertations on Government: the Affair of the Bank; and Paper Money was completed on February 18.

Six days later it was off the press and into the hands of the delegates

in the Pennsylvania Assembly. This particular pamphlet was considered the most effective propaganda to be published during the Pennsylvania Bank War in the defense of the bank and condemning the use of paper money as unequitable payment for debts.

1787. Paine's mind and talents now concentrated on experiments in natural science and his design for a pierless iron bridge. On January 1, 1787, the model of the iron bridge was exhibited in the Pennsylvania State House. However, it did not receive the acclamation, praise and endorsements Paine had anticipated. Benjamin Franklin advised Paine to show his model to the Royal Society in London and the Royal Academy of Sciences in Paris, believing that with this favorable publicity his chances for a sizable subsidy from the Pennsylvania Assembly might be assured. On the 26 of April Paine sailed from New York for France.

While in France, as the famous author of Common Sense, Paine circulated easily in prominent social and intellectual circles. He saw much of Thomas Jefferson at this time, since Jefferson was the American Minister to France. In England, Paine visited Thetford and his aged mother, his father having died the previous year. Back in London he renewed old friendships, using John Trumbull's home as his base of operations. During this period he was introduced to Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox, as well as Americans Joel Barlow and Benjamin West. To Paine's joy he was readily accepted into influential English circles. While in London he published his Prospects on the Rubicon, whereupon he declared his belief that

England and France should consider advantageous trade agreements instead of war with one another. Meanwhile he waited for an endorsement from the Royal Society for his iron bridge.

1788. Impatient for the British to approve his bridge, Paine returned to Paris in hope the French would actually construct the bridge there. The bridge actually cemented an interesting friendship between Paine, Jefferson and the Marquis de Lafayette. By May Paine was still in Paris with no firm contract for the construction of the bridge, but word arrived that some wealthy English gentlemen were interested in the project and investing in it. So Paine left immediately and by mid-June was back in London.

Paine received his patent early in September and the Walker Ironworks in Yorkshire agreed to construct the bridge. Work moved smoothly and Paine's interest turned to current events and Parliamentary debate. He took it upon himself to become the American unofficial minister in London so that he could be on hand to report pertinent news to Jefferson.

1789. During January and February, 1789, correspondence moved rapidly between Paine and Jefferson concerning the political environment in both England and France. Jefferson accepted Paine's unofficial ministerial status and corresponded with General Washington as to the facts Paine presented. Thomas Jefferson in turn afforded Paine with full, uncensored information concerning the progress of affairs on the Continent, particularly regarding the explosive French situation. King Louis XVI had called for the convening of the Estates

General for the first time in a century and a half and this was extraordinary news. Meanwhile Paine and Edmund Burke continued on the best of terms, neither one seemingly disturbed by the French state of affairs. During the summer of 1789 Paine concentrated all his efforts in shuttling back and forth between London and the Walker Ironworks in Rotherham. (The Paine-Walker Bridge was actually erected at Paddington-Green in June, 1790.) As Paine began to see his dream becoming a reality, he also visualized an iron bridge based on his own design arched over the Thames. The Walkers were likewise caught up in this vision and endeavored to locate additional construction materials and financial backing. Paine wrote Jefferson on July 13 that he planned to undertake all of the expenses, if necessary, to complete the erecting of the bridge and then exhibit it, placing it for sale with the profits divided 50-50 between himself and the Walkers.

In October a moment of embarrassment delayed Paine's return to Paris. Peter Whiteside, one of his original backers for the bridge construction, went bankrupt. His books disclosed that Paine owed him some 600 pounds. Whiteside's creditors demanded satisfaction and ordered Paine's debt paid immediately. Since he could not give them the money, he was arrested on October 29. He was incarcerated in a debtors' "half-way house" for three weeks. Two American commercial agents, Messrs. Clegget and Murdock, put up the necessary bail for his release.³ Paine, having received some additional monies from America, was set free in November and at once left

England for Paris. While in Paris Paine was given the key to the Bastille by Lafayette. This key was to be presented to General Washington and Paine soon sent it on to him.

1790. During 1790 Paine spent his time traveling between France and England. He spent months in France at the personal invitation of the Marquises de Lafayette and Condorcet, who honored him by requesting his advice on the formation of a constitution. He aided in the formulation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Back in England, he continued to correspond with Lafayette, sending him suggestions to be incorporated into the new French government.

In London Paine was in constant contact with Gouverneur Morris, who had recently been appointed by Washington as an unofficial American representative to England. At this time Paine was introduced to new social circles at the invitation of Joseph Johnson, a prominent publisher and bookseller, noted for his liberal political thought. Here he first met William Godwin and his later wife, the formidable Mary Wollstonecraft. Other friends of Johnson who were members of the Society for Constitutional Information-- John Frost, Thomas Hollis, John Cartwright, Thomas Holcroft and John Horne Tooke--made Paine's acquaintance at the Johnson dinner table.

In the fall of 1790 Paine returned to Paris and to his friends Brissot, Condorcet and Lafayette. He was in Paris for only a short period of time before a personal business crisis sent him back to London. In November he began what is considered by many

critics his greatest pamphlet, The Rights of Man, as a reply to Edmund Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution. Burke's Reflections had only been published since November 1, and Paine was quick to answer what he considered a vicious denunciation of the French Revolution.

1791. Paine finished the treatise in February and his new friend and associate, Joseph Johnson, published it. However, after having viewed some of the reaction to the pamphlet, Johnson became quite frightened. Paine then left the treatise in the care of those associates he had met in Johnson's home, William Godwin, Thomas Holcroft and Thomas Hollis, and departed immediately for France. Later, from Paris, he forwarded a preface for the English edition of the pamphlet. The Rights of Man, Part I, was then published for a second time on March 13, 1791. Interestingly enough, it sold for the same three shillings price as did Burke's Reflections. The general response to Paine's Rights was mixed, producing rabid exhortations from both political extremist positions. The French translation appeared in May. In July Paine executed an attack on the Monarchy in a public letter to the Abbé Sieyès, who had earlier condemned Paine for his excessive republicanism.

In the middle of July Paine returned to London. He reassociated himself with liberal, reformist colleagues such as Horne Tooke, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Thomas "Clio" Rickman and others. In August he issued his Address and Declaration of the Friends of Universal Peace and Liberty, in which he once again

defended the French Revolution. By November he was one of the charter members and leaders of the Democratic-Republican Society in London.

1792. While residing in Thomas "Clio" Rickman's home in London, Paine completed Part II of The Rights of Man and published it on February 17. By May Paine's publisher, J. S. Jordan, was indicted by the government for publishing a seditious book because in the eyes of the authorities the rather dignified indignation of Part I had degenerated into an insolent, contemptible attack upon kingship and other such sacred institutions. In June Paine, himself, was indicted and charged with seditious libel. On June 8 the government announced that it had postponed his trial until December 18. Between June and September Paine continued to establish his position as a "thorn in the side" of the English government. On September 12 Paine addressed the society of the "Friends of Liberty," giving a rousing speech calling for revolutionary action on the part of all lovers of liberty. Having been forewarned that he might be arrested, Paine dropped off at the printers his latest attack against the British government, Letter Addressed ot the Addressers on the Late Proclamation. Paine left London on September 13 for Calais, where a week before he had been elected as a delegate to the French Convention representing Calais. He arrived in Paris on September 19. His Address to the Addressers was quickly published in London. The resounding effect from this latest attack was that Paine was burned in effigy and labeled outlaw in the British Isles.

1793. Meanwhile, Paine was made a member of a nine-man commission for constructing a new constitution for France. This constitution was never officially adopted due to many circumstances. France declared war on England on February 1. She had executed her king, Louis XVI, in January and Paine was one of the few Deputies who invited sharp criticism by opposing the execution. The Jacobin forces soon became the majority party and began to liquidate their rivals, the Girondists and their disciples. Paine ceased to attend the Convention after June 2. In the period between June and December he wrote Part I of The Age of Reason, written as a condemnation of the prevailing atheism in France at the time. On December 28 Paine was arrested and, upon his request, was allowed to visit his friend Joel Barlow before being taken to the Luxembourg Prison. Paine was able to slip the manuscript of The Age of Reason to Barlow during this particular occasion. He now began a prison term which lasted some ten months and broke his health.

1794. Part I of The Age of Reason was published in Paris, London and New York. Paine would not feel the full effect of the response to his deistic treatise until a later time. While in prison he suffered from numerous high fevers and a running abscess in his side. He continually corresponded with James Monroe concerning the gravity of his situation. He could not understand why Gouverneur Morris and President Washington had not come to his rescue. He was released from the Luxembourg on November 4, 1794, in such a deplorable condition as to appear more dead than alive. He spent

eighteen months recuperating in the home of James Monroe, his benefactor and friend, the American Ambassador to France who had attained Paine's release from prison.

On December 8, 1794, the National Convention voted to reinstate some seventy-three Deputies who had been removed from office during the Reign of Terror. Paine's name headed the list of those to be recalled to duty.

1795. Paine accepted the apology and reinstatement with suspicion. He did not attend the Convention during the first half of the year. He did, however, use his influence to aid friends in obtaining passposts from the foreign office. His first major work since his release from prison was Dissertation on the First Principles of Government. After a few months Paine began to experience the violent reaction to his Part I of The Age of Reason. It had incensed the public and produced waves of fury in both England and America. In reality Paine had said nothing that had not been stated many times before by other Deists. The condemnation, however, came with his deliberate frankness and vehemence in resurrecting some old theories concerning Biblical criticism. He was also guilty of the serious crime of taking a "gentleman's religion" and giving it to the people. Thus where The Rights of Man had undermined the traditional deference of the common people in politics, The Age of Reason repeated the same offense in religion. Nevertheless, criticism did not deter Paine from completing Part II of The Age of Reason, which was issued to the public in September-October of 1795.

1796. Paine appeared to have established a meaningful relationship with the new government, the five-man Directory. In the intervening time, he tested the friendship and hospitality of James Monroe almost to the breaking point. Monroe became convinced that Paine betrayed private confidences to the Directory so that his statements were not received as representative of the situation at hand. Ambassador Monroe felt his effectiveness had been reduced dramatically when dealing with the Directory and it was due to Paine's lack of secrecy.

The two major works published in 1796 were The Decline and Fall of the English System of Banking and the "Letter to George Washington." Paine's pen was almost prophetic in its impact because the Bank of England did suspend the convertibility of its bank notes into specie early the next year. Nevertheless, the bank crisis was survived by both England and her Bank. The "Letter to George Washington" was considered by his enemies a disjointed, unorganized mass of hate and indignation. Over half of the seventy-page letter was devoted to Paine's comments on the Jay Treaty, calling it a supreme sacrifice of false security and compromise to the English at the expense of American-French friendship. The letter also contained personal remarks aimed at old friends and enemies alike. The direct response to the letter was to arm Washington's great host of friends and fellow Federalists with formidable ammunition against Paine. It has been said that this particular letter combined with The Age of Reason virtually blocked most of Paine's influence after his return to the United States.

1797. During the winter of 1796-97 Paine wrote Agrarian Justice while still residing in the home of the Monroes. He later left the Monroe home (at their request) and moved in with his old friend, Nicolas de Bonneville and family.

It appeared as if Paine's talent had been completely re-stored for Agrarian Justice reinstated his fame as a great essayist. This particular essay ranked among Paine's finest, and being well organized, carefully versed and planned, it was a complete turnabout from the disjointed style of his "Letter to George Washington."

During this time, Paine resurrected old friendships with Joel Barlow, Robert Fulton and others. He was introduced to General Napoleon Bonaparte, who adroitly remarked about how he had been influenced by The Rights of Man. In December Paine wrote two articles concerning the use of gunboats for an invasion of Britain and how finances might be obtained for this fleet. General Bonaparte was evidently impressed by Paine's plans, but by the following February he had dismissed the project without even informing Paine. Because of sensitivity to the slightest criticism the Directory decided to break all relations with Paine. His anti-American attitude had become a source of embarrassment to the French government so, in 1798, they severed all ties with him. Paine now turned his attention to his Theophilanthropist activities since he was no longer of service to France's government.

1799. This year was a quiet one for Paine. He began to initiate plans for returning to the United States. His influence being

totally void, he watched in silence as Bonaparte's coup d'etat took place.

1800. The turn of the century was also an uneventful year for Thomas Paine. He was silenced in France, exiled from England and isolated from the United States. Back in America his old friend and confidant, Thomas Jefferson, was to be the next President. With hope in his heart Paine now began to make arrangements for his return home.

1802-09. On October 30, 1802, Paine landed in Baltimore. The Federalist press, almost immediately, used him as a main target against President Jefferson. Paine's "Letter to George Washington" and The Age of Reason yielded all the ammunition they needed against the old man. Much to the dismay of the Federalists, Paine did not live out his remaining years in quiet obscurity. Instead he continued to write attacks against the Federalist position and defenses of his comrade, Thomas Jefferson. The major political attacks appeared in eight essays entitled Letters to the Citizens of the United States.

In this period prior to his death Paine moved his residence on several occasions. He lived on his farm in New Rochelle, in Bordentown and New York City. His health, broken in prison, deteriorated until he was totally bedridden. He died on June 8, 1809. He was buried without ceremony in New Rochelle, New York. He was further humiliated by being denied burial in the local Quaker cemetery even after he had personally requested it.

Postscript

Twenty years after his death, the bones of Thomas Paine were secretly reinterred by a former foe turned disciple, British journalist, William Cobbett. The remains were taken to England, kept by Cobbett in a trunk, and were later lost when the family estate was liquidated. This was certainly an ignominious ending to any man's life.

NOTES

¹ Since most of the facts of Paine's life and career presented here are not controversial and are commonly accepted by the major biographers, authorities and students of Paine, there will be a minimal footnote documentation of this section.

² No first name for Mr. Gardiner, Headmaster of Kensington School, London, is recorded in any biography. The original source for this information is George Chalmers (Francis Oldys), Life of Paine, published in 1791.

³ David Freeman Hawke, Paine (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), p. 200. Professor Hawke is the only biographer who mentions the names of Paine's benefactors; no first names were given in this instance. Neither did Professor Hawke list the source for his unique information.

CHAPTER II

REACTION AND LEGACY: THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY,
THE ENVIRONMENT AND THOMAS PAINE

Never was there an age so skeptical toward tradition, so confident in the power of human reason and of science, so firmly convinced of the regularity and harmony of nature, and so deeply imbued with a sense of civilization's advance and progress.

R. R. Palmer
A History of the Modern World

Scholars have christened the eighteenth century, this particular period in the history of western civilization, the Enlightenment or Age of Reason. There can be no doubt that reason, rational behavior and the concerted effort to educate and reform was clearly a major objective within the age but, nevertheless, it was also a time of intense action and reaction, contrast and contradiction. Some of the characteristics that have been easily demarcated as distinctively peculiar to the period were, namely, the key principles of reason and system, enlightened despotism, deism, evangelistic revival, secularism, materialism, naturalism and antitraditionalism.

It was into this environment, full of idealism but beset with the usual, unescapable realities of human misery, Thomas Paine was born.

Often Thomas Paine has been considered, if not classified, a typical representative of his day, a true man of the eighteenth

century who exhibited the same characteristics as his historical period. An enormous amount of evidence points to the accuracy of this evaluation of Paine because he appears to be a product of his era and typified the philosophies, virtues and vices prevalent during the 1700's. He was a rationalist, humanitarian, a believer in natural rights, natural religion and in the mutual contract between the government and those governed. He was an individualist who was not afraid of becoming personally involved and stood firmly on those principles he considered right and just, beneficial to all mankind. Exemplifying his age, he was quick to react against those elements of traditionalism which kept men's minds and lives in chains. He became intolerant of all expressions of intolerance and thus became as dogmatic as the reactionaries he detested. Finally, like many in this century, he was a contradiction, an enigma, who endeavored to accomplish great and wonderful works but, nevertheless, slowly declined and sputtered into personal absurdity. This man who had known virtually every prominent figure in the political arenas of England, France and America would not be publicly praised by a single one of them after his death.¹

In their attempt to analyze Thomas Paine, the man, many biographers and critics have attempted to discover and define those hereditary and environmental ingredients that combined to create the finished product. Thomas Paine's family life, childhood experiences, his trials, tribulation and failures at various professions were all taken into account as possible important factors that led to the

development of his basically antitraditional social, political, religious and economic philosophy.

This chapter will present an overview of the major remarks by biographers and critics concerning the question of hereditary and environmental factors and their influence upon the life and thought of Thomas Paine.

Thomas Paine was born in the town of Thetford, county of Norfolk, on January 29, 1737. Thetford at this time had a population of scarcely 2000 souls. The life in this little town was rather quiet, conservative and restrictive, not different from any other small place in Norfolkshire. The surroundings, especially the "Brecklands," were rich with grass, wildlife and flowers. It was not an unpleasant environment in which a boy could mature. If a young boy had a yen to learn more about the world there were many stagecoaches that stopped at the Bell Hostelry, where he might converse and pass the time with the travellers.²

Moncure Daniel Conway, in his research for his biography, The Life of Thomas Paine (published in 1892), spent time in Thetford gathering information and exploring for any data about Paine and his childhood there. A letter to Conway from F. H. Millington of Thetford graphically describes the town during the early years of Thomas Paine. There is no better setting illustrative of what he must have observed and experienced during these childhood days:

In Paine's boyhood the town (about 2,000 inhabitants) possessed a corporation with major, aldermen, sword-bearers, macemen, recorder. The corporation was a corrupt body, under the dominance of the Duke of Grafton, a prominent member of the Whig

government. Both members of Parliament (Hon. C. Fitzroy and Lord Augustus Fitzroy) were nominees of Grafton. The people had no interest and no power, and I do not think politics were of any account in Paine's childhood. From Paine's "Rights of Man" (Part ii, p. 108) it is clear that his native town was the model in his mind when he wrote on charters and corporations. The Lent Assizes for the Eastern Circuit were held here, and Paine would be familiar with the procedure and pomp of a court of justice. He would also be familiar with the sight of men and women hung for trivial offences. Thetford was on the main road to London, and was a posting centre. Paine would be familiar with the faces and equipages of some of the great Whig nobles in Norfolk. Walpole might pass through on his way to Houghton. The river Ouse was navigable to Lynn, and Paine would probably go on a barge to that flourishing seaport. Bury St. Edmunds was a provincial capital for the nobility and gentry of the district. It was twelve miles from Thetford, and in closest connection with it. The religious life of Thetford would be quiet. The churches were poor, having been robbed at the reformation. The Quakers were the only non-conformists in the town. There is a tradition that Wesley visited the town; if he did Paine would no doubt be among his hearers. On the whole, I think it easy to trace in Paine's works the influence of his boyhood here. He would see the corrupting influence of the aristocracy, the pomp of law, the evils of the unreformed corporations; the ruins of great ecclesiastical establishments, much more perfect than now, would bring to his mind what a power the church had been. Being of a mechanical turn of mind no doubt he had often played about the paper-mill which was, and is, worked by water-power.³

Moncure D. Conway added some remarks of his own from the facts he had gathered from the local history of Thetford. He remarked that Thomas Paine might have observed the obscene conditions in and around Thetford where children were sent to the gallows for stealing food. During his thirteenth year he might have seen the execution of Amy Hutchinson, aged seventeen, convicted of poisoning her husband. The event took place some ten miles from Thetford at Ely Minster. The detailed description from the Notes and Queries (September 27, 1873) of this execution remarkably portrays the lack of compassion for human life on this particular occasion.

Her face and hands were smeared with tar, and having a garment daubed with pitch, after a short prayer the executioner strangled her, and twenty minutes after the fire was kindled and burnt half an hour.⁴

Conway continued his detailed account of Paine's early years with a description of the Thetford Quaker meetinghouse and surroundings. He considered this place of worship as Paine's true birthplace.

Its small windows and one door open on the tombless graveyard at the back . . . the interior is hardly large enough to seat fifty people. Adjoining the meeting-house, and in contact with it, stands the ancient gaol, from which may have been derived the name "Cage Lane." In its front are two iron-grated arches, at one of which was the pillory, at the other the stocks,--the latter remembered by some now living.⁵

Moncure D. Conway resumed his reporting with his own speculation of the effects of this environment upon young Thomas.

On "first-day," when his schoolmates went in fine clothes to grand churches, to see gay people and hear fine music, little Thomas, dressed in drab, crept affrightened past the stocks to his childhood's pillory in the dismal meeting-house. For him no beauty or mirth, no music but the oaths of the pilloried, or shrieks of those waiting the gallows. There could be no silent meeting in Cage Lane. Testimonies of the "Spirit" against inhumanity, delivered beside instruments of legal torture, bred pity in the child, who had a poetic temperament.⁶

Conway concluded his background study of Paine's early years with the statement that:

We look in vain for anything that can be described as true boyhood in Paine. . . . There are, indeed, various indications that, in one way or another, Thetford and Quakerism together managed to make the early years of their famous son miserable.⁷

Another biographer, historian David Freeman Hawke, whose Paine is the most recent "Life" and the most objective and professional work published in the past few years (published in 1974) also has much to say concerning the environment in which Thomas Paine spent his early

years. His position is in opposition with Moncure D. Conway's on various points. Professor Hawke agrees with Conway as to the influence of Thetford upon Paine's philosophical make-up, but he disagrees as to the degree of significance Paine's early years influenced his personality traits and general philosophical outlook.

Professor Hawke began his treatment with remarks about Thetford and its apathetic attitude toward the visible social abuses of the period.

. . . Joseph Pain--thus the family name was spelled until the son came to America--was an impecunious resident of Thetford, a village located on the post road some seventy miles northeast of London. Of the two thousand or so inhabitants only thirty-one qualified to vote for two men Thetford sent to Parliament. It perturbed few of Joseph Pain's contemporaries that over half of Parliament was elected by less than six thousand voters out of a population of some five million Englishmen, nor did stories they heard of the corruption that pervaded the government seed thoughts of revolt in their minds.⁸

Using as a source some introductory remarks from G. D. H. Cole's and Raymond Postgate's book, The British Common People, 1746-1946, Professor Hawke concluded that "almost without exception all classes of society were indifferent to the vast collection of abuses" they witnessed in their society.⁹ Indeed, it might be added that the first fifty years of the eighteenth century "showed a steady, if slow, increase in real comforts and in civilization for all classes in England," therefore, one "who benefited by this was inclined to oppose seriously the system which might be supposed to have produced this advance."¹⁰

With his introductory remarks completed, Dr. Hawke proceeded to illuminate his own interpretation of the effects of Thomas Paine's unhappy childhood upon his later life. Hawke suggested that the evidence

clearly demonstrates that Paine "suffered a normally unhappy childhood and did his best to escape rather than persevere against the troubles encountered."¹¹ Later in his life, "the swipe at an aristocracy that had 'not been able to reach or to rival' his achievements hints at the pool of bile stored up" from his youth.¹²

In this way Dr. Hawke justified his belief that Thomas Paine was influenced by the surroundings and circumstances of his youth. In contrast to Moncure D. Conway, Hawke stressed that Paine's parents gave up much in order that their son might receive a good education. However, when it was obvious that this sharp but lazy son had lost his chance to rise above his station in society, he was taken out of school and put to work in his father's shop as an apprentice stay-maker.¹³ Moncure D. Conway glossed over Thomas Paine's lack of scholarly perseverance and in his biography he intimated the reason for Paine's being pulled out of school at the age of thirteen was financial necessity.¹⁴

There are many differences of opinion and interpretation expressed by biographers, historians and critics about Thomas Paine and those factors that profoundly influenced the total man, his character, beliefs and philosophy. Moncure D. Conway was the first of the modern biographers who endeavored to portray the life of Paine in a positive, applaudable light. Hawke, the last major biographer to date, achieved his objective of depicting Paine neither as hero nor as villain, but simply as a man who played a significant role in English, American and French history, leaving his mark upon those nations in both a positive and negative manner.

The comments of other biographers and critics who believed that Thomas Paine's childhood and early struggles were important factors in his total development must be included at this time in order that an objective and comprehensive overview of the environmental influence question might be accomplished.

Richard Carlile, in his 1819 study of the political writings of Thomas Paine, called him a nature's child "from the beginning, and the success of his writings was mainly attributable to his never losing sight of this infallible guide."¹⁵

In an extremely laudatory biographical account, author William M. Van der Weyde made the following comments about Paine's boyhood and its impression on his later life:

There is no doubt that what Thomas Paine saw and heard as a schoolboy made a deep impression upon his mind. To the wrongs of man, as noted by a child, we may readily trace Paine's later championship of the rights of man. The spirit of the reformer and revolutionist was engendered in those early years in Thetford. His was, indeed, not a joyful childhood. Had his youth been happier than it was, it is more likely that the world would never have heard of Thomas Paine.¹⁶

Elbert Hubbard in his book, Thomas Paine: the Great Commoner of Mankind, made quite a few remarks about his background. For instance, Hubbard attributed Paine's humble origin and his Quaker ancestry as being the most helpful factors in his career. In fact, the author continued, "only a working man who had tasted hardship could sympathize with the overtaxed and oppressed."¹⁷

When discussing Thomas Paine's education, Elbert Hubbard offered the following insight:

Paine's schooling was slight; but his parents, though poor, were thinking people, for nothing sharpens the wits of men, preventing fatty degeneration of the cerebrum, like persecution. In this respect the Jews and the Quakers have been greatly blessed and benefited.¹⁸

Mary Agnes Best in her study, Thomas Paine: Prophet and Martyr of Democracy, emphasized the importance of his Quaker upbringing.

Raised in the traditions of Friends, he had the Quaker serene indifference to ridicule or abuse. He was in his time the greatest exponent of the principles of the Quaker revolt against tradition; individual freedom, equality, universal peace and brotherhood, and obedience to the still, small voice of an unstifled conscience.¹⁹

The British biographer, F. J. Gould, who had often visited Thetford, made the following observation in his biographical account of the life of Thomas Paine:

Quiet places often breed strenuous spirits. Tranquil Huntingdon gave us Oliver Cromwell. To the remote village of Burnham Thorpe we owe Horatio Nelson. And the stranger who strolls past the flint churches, the almshouses, and who leans over the bridge and looks at the limpid water of the Little Ouse, would hardly expect to hear that so demure a town could produce the adventurous and explosive soul of Thomas Paine.²⁰

After several pages of introductory material, Gould endeavored to explain what prompted Thomas Paine to rebel against his homeland and severely criticize her institutions:

We may try to pack the answer into one concise sentence, thus: England's economic expansion, in machinery, in manufactures, in improving agriculture, and in overseas discovery and commerce, was not accompanied by an equally rapid expansion in the power of educational, social and political adaptation to the new environment. We may couch the answer in personal terms, and say that the aristocrats, land-owners, clergy, Universities, men of letters, manufacturers, merchants and bankers, who then formed the

Government, were unable collectively to understand and meet the material and moral needs of the nation at home or abroad.²¹

Hesketh Pearson also commented about the great influence of personal hardship and suffering upon Thomas Paine's beliefs:

His domestic life had given him nothing; it would have been better for him (and his wives) if he had never married. His trade of stay-making had brought him little but starvation and irritation. His job as an exciseman had been taken from him, in the first case he was too indulgent to individuals, in the second because he had fought for his fellows. He had experienced the impotence of poverty and witnessed the indifference of the powerful. He had been familiar from childhood with the un-Christian rivalry of sects; he had learned the uselessness of attempting to argue men out of their prejudices; and he had come to the unavoidable conclusion that the mass of mankind were more interested in wars, quarrels, jealousies, sports, and other forms of silly rivalry, than in bettering their condition or improving their minds by the study of philosophy and science.²²

S. M. Berthold continued the popular theory that placed great emphasis upon Thomas Paine's Quaker heritage. In his estimation, it was through Paine's Quaker training that "a well grounded conception of the rights of others, those lofty principles that underlie all his writings," was received.²³ Berthold also added that the lessons Paine learned in childhood "must have so often recurred that they became habitual and fixed" in his mind.²⁴

In his introduction to the compilation, The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine, Dr. Philip S. Foner remarked about Paine's heritage and its influence on his thought. He agreed with those biographers who believed that Quakerism was a major influence in his life. However, Dr. Foner also concurred that unquestionably Newtonian science had a great influence upon his political and religious theory. The

key for Foner, however, was even more simple as he suggested in the following statement:

But life itself was an extremely important teacher. During the first thirty-seven years of his life he saw enough misery in England, enough of the contrast between the affluence of the upper classes and the poverty and suffering of the masses to influence his thinking for the remainder of his days.²⁵

The biographer, W. E. Woodward, endeavored to present a psychological resumé of the vast importance of Thomas Paine's boyhood environment upon the development of his personality and thought.

His family life was described as follows:

He had no brothers or sisters to keep him company. His mother gave birth in August, 1738, to a daughter--christened Elizabeth--but this little girl died in early infancy. So Tom grew up as an only child in a home that was morbidly depressing. His father's solemn personality, filled to the brim with a sense of sin and an abhorrence of every kind of frivolity, was matched by the cantankerous fault-finding of his mother. In that family no games were played, no funny stories told, and no jolly parties gathered to pass the evening.²⁶

Another three pages were devoted to W. E. Woodward's interpretation of Tom Paine's morbid school experiences. In his conclusion, Woodward surmised that the following was true:

It is wholly possible that if Paine was unusually gifted as a boy his superior qualities were crushed so completely at school and in his home that they took a good long sleep and did not awake until his life began anew on another continent.²⁷

Professor Leo Gurko continued along the same avenues as W. E. Woodward. He also was most interested in presenting evidence of the unwholesome, disagreeable family life of Thomas Paine. In analyzing some of the reasons why Paine was later against orthodox Christianity,

Dr. Gurko suggested that his family environment may have implanted the seed of heresy:

His family life was hardly more agreeable. His mother, eleven years older than his father, was an ill-tempered woman who felt that she had married beneath her station and never stopped reminding her husband of it. She also differed with him on religious matters. Belonging to the Church of England, she looked down on Quakers as an upstart sect and was always making derogatory comments about them. Whatever normal inclination Tom might have had to organized religion was seriously weakened by the theological quarrels between his parents.²⁸

Perhaps the most outstanding contribution to the discussion of the life and thought of Thomas Paine was to be found in Arnold Kinsey King's doctoral dissertation, "Thomas Paine in America, 1774-1787."

Dr. King rapidly established the fact that Thomas Paine was very close-mouthed about his life before his arrival in America in 1774. Except for an occasional reference to his past, Paine was basically something of a mystery man.²⁹ Because so few references to his early experiences can be gleaned from his writings, "Paine apparently found it unpleasant to recall much of the first half of his life in England . . . ,"³⁰ Dr. King continued, "and yet these years doubtless exerted a powerful influence on his character and on the ideas which he expressed so clearly and forcefully in his revolutionary writings."³¹

As far as the importance of the Quaker influence, Dr. King made the following statement:

Paine's later behavior, his style of writing and his own testimony all would point to the conclusion that he may have found the precepts of a Quaker father and the doctrines

of an Anglican aunt equal forces of irritation. There is slight ground for Conway's elaborate thesis: "Had there been no Quaker there had been no Thomas Paine."³²

Disagreeing with those biographers who pictured the destitute young Paine living in the slums of London, Dr. King stressed the importance of this experience in his life in this manner:

He doubtless led the hard life of a poorly paid journeyman in the great eighteenth-century metropolis with all of its contrasts of poverty and wealth. Paine was already conscious of the inequality in British society, but he now saw them on a grand scale for the first time. The slum section of London, with its cheap gin shops where the poor could drown their misery for a half-penny, was a revolting place. Respectable artisans, however, did not frequent this section, and there is not the slightest evidence that Paine ever sank to the level pictured in Hogarth's "Gin Lane."³³

All the biographers and critics who attempted to present an inclusive, in depth study of Thomas Paine and his writings included some background information relating to his life before his arrival in America in 1774.

Some individualism in interpretation is easily detected in that most of the researchers cannot agree as to the priority or the singular importance of certain hereditary or environmental factors on the development of Thomas Paine's character and thought. Some concede that his Quaker heritage was the most important factor while others insist that his scientific predisposition is the greatest conditioning agent in his philosophical development. Still other investigators grant that Paine's unhappy childhood, marriages and constant failure in business and vocation all united to produce the man and formulate his rationalism.

The sampling of individualism in interpretation is merely a preface, a foretaste, to evidence of even greater examples of uncomformity in treatment that will be revealed in the forthcoming chapters on Thomas Paine as seen through the eyes of biographers, critics and historians.

NOTES

- ¹ David Freeman Hawke, Paine (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 401.
- ² Audrey Williamson, Thomas Paine, His Life, Work and Times (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), p. 21.
- ³ Moncure Daniel Conway, The Life of Thomas Paine, ed. Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner (London: Watts & Co., 1909), p. 4.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 5.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Hawke, p. 8.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid., pp. 9-10.
- ¹⁴ Conway, p. 6.
- ¹⁵ Richard Carlile, Political and Miscellaneous Works of Thomas Paine (London: Richard Carlile, 1819), Vol. I, p. v.
- ¹⁶ William M. Van der Weyde, The Life and Works of Thomas Paine (New Rochelle, New York: Thomas Paine National Historical Association, 1925), Vol. I, p. 5.
- ¹⁷ Elbert Hubbard, Thomas Paine: The Great Commoner of Mankind (New York: The Roycrofters, 1914), p. 7.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 7-8.
- ¹⁹ Mary Agnes Best, Thomas Paine: Prophet and Martyr of Democracy (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927), p. 406.
- ²⁰ F. J. Gould, Thomas Paine (1737-1809) (London: Leonard Parsons, Ltd., 1925), p. 7.

- 21 Gould, p. 14.
- 22 Hesketh Pearson, Tom Paine: Friend of Mankind (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937), pp. 14-15.
- 23 S. M. Berthold, Thomas Paine: America's First Liberal (Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1938), p. 191
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Philip S. Foner, ed., The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine (New York: Citadel Press, 1945), Vol. I, p. x.
- 26 W. E. Woodward, Tom Paine: America's Godfather (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1945), p. 20.
- 27 Ibid., p. 23.
- 28 Leo Gurko, Tom Paine: Freedom's Apostle (New York: Thomas E. Crowell Co., 1957), p. 58.
- 29 Arnold Kinsey King, "Thomas Paine in America, 1774-1787" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1951), p. 1.
- 30 Ibid., p. 2.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid., p. 5.
- 33 Ibid., pp. 10-11.

CHAPTER III

THOMAS PAINE: THE MAN AS SEEN THROUGH
THE EYES OF HIS BIOGRAPHERS

The biographer, after researching the facts and traditions available to him, endeavors to descriptively record the life, career, influence and significance of his chosen subject. The ideal result of the writer's effort should be an acute and penetrating analytical case study which is permeated with sufficient creativity to inspire further inquiry into the life of the main character. Often the ideal product of a biographical study, however, is not achieved and through lack of objectivity a highly opinionated, biased interpretation evolves from even the best and purest intentions.

Objectivity, the fulcrum of historical excellence, often proves to be an elusive principle even though it must be unquestionably attempted. Must the perceptive and discerning student disregard all materials he determines to be distorted or highly prejudicial in content? The question must be confronted and an effort made to discover an equitable answer.

Without question eighteenth- and nineteenth-century biographical studies on Thomas Paine frequently reveal an overt absence of objectivity. More than a few biographers and critics since Paine's demise have depicted him in either an heroic or villainous attitude. It is in the twentieth century that objectivity in discussing Paine begins to be clearly discernible.

Thomas Paine was an extremely complex individual exhibiting, apparently, a more self-contradictory nature than the average man of his times. Therefore it is inevitable that no two writers view him in the same manner and each one, whether disciple or antagonist, has intimated that Paine has been misunderstood by everyone except himself. As Thomas Paine was significantly influenced by his eighteenth-century environment, those who judged him and wrote about his life, career and influence have correspondingly been affected by the complexion relative to their own surroundings, personal experiences and mores. The fact is evident that the illusive Mr. Paine has rarely been captured in a purely realistic manner, for the biographer or critic cannot fail to color his subject without some interference from his own attitudes and prejudices. The question of objectivity remains, for it is almost impossible for any biographer to continue to be totally impersonal when dealing with such a contradictory and controversial character.

If this be the case that so few "Lives" of Paine are clearly unbiased accounts, why then should an effort be made to read, study and evaluate them? An answer, perhaps even an equitable one, would be that, whether the final effort is adjudged insipid, biased and basically inaccurate, some seeds of truth remain. Thus these seeds gleaned and sifted by the cautious observer can produce an informative synthesis of those factors and elements which combine to form the assemblage of qualities, physical, mental and moral, that set Thomas Paine apart from others and label him a distinctively unique individual.

Every biography, therefore, or biographical sketch of Thomas Paine, no matter the academic quality, is important. Each in its own

way, like pieces in a puzzle, is essential to the creation of a comprehensive, intricate portrait of the subject. The most prejudiced journalistic account is nevertheless a worthwhile study and should not be excluded simply because it is not considered professionally objective.

The purpose of this chapter is to endeavor to present the opinions of as many biographers of Paine as possible, noticing trends in treatment, if any, occurring from the eighteenth century down through the present day "Lives" by Noel B. Gerson, David Freeman Hawke and Audrey Williamson.

In order to achieve this goal the following information will be sought after, using a basically chronological approach, in an attempt to present, interpret and evaluate the principal and less noteworthy biographies, as well as the numerous biographical articles, essays and dissertations concerning the life of Thomas Paine. The first step will be to analyze the tone, content and quality of the biographical study. Secondly, the aims and objectives of the author will be stated when that data is available or detected from the general content and tone. Specific traits and eccentricities of Paine's character will be noted when the author seems to emphasize their importance. If any other factors of interest are accentuated by the author these also will be mentioned. Finally, comments concerning Paine's influence and the consequences of his life and career upon eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political, economic and intellectual thought will be analyzed from the biographer's personal perspective.

The intricate, more detailed commentary involving Thomas Paine's political, economic and intellectual philosophy as expressed by individual biographers will be set aside at this time. These particular points will be discussed later in the appropriate sequential chapters devoted to those specific subject areas.

Biographies of the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century

Introduction

The first six biographies based on the life and work of Thomas Paine were published between 1791 and 1821. The authors and dates of publishing are as follows: George Chalmers (Francis Oldys, pseudonym), 1791; James Cheetham, 1809; Thomas Clio Rickman, 1819; William Sherwin, 1819; Richard Carlile, 1820; and John Harford, 1820.

Within this thirty-year period, three of the six earliest biographical efforts were significantly antagonistic toward their main character, while the remaining three were equally sympathetic in their general treatment of Thomas Paine.

George Chalmers, writing under the pseudonym Francis Oldys, and using the degree title A.M. of the University of Pennsylvania, was the first to produce a biography of Thomas Paine. His title, The Life of Thomas Pain, Author of 'The Rights of Men,' with a Defence of his Writings, offered the immediate impression that the book was just as the title suggested, a defense of Paine's The Rights of Man. Perhaps many a disciple of Thomas Paine was duped into purchasing a copy because of this tricky title. The "Introduction," like the title,

fashioned a rather inducing façade of the true aims and objectives of the author. Mr. Chalmers began his biographical study with the following carefully chosen words:

It has been established by the reiterated suffrage of mankind, that the lives of those persons, who have either performed useful actions, or neglected essential duties, ought to be recounted, as much for an example to the present age, as for the instruction of future times.

Few men have more justly merited the honour of this notice, either as an example to be avoided at present, or as a lesson to be learned hereafter, than the personage, whose actions we are now to recount, and whose writings we are about to defend.¹

After the first few pages there was no more question as to the author's disposition toward his protagonist. George Chalmers introduced his denunciation of Paine, the man, and Paine, the political philosopher and literary genius, from the very onset in the main body of content. From the fourth page of the text, Chalmers begins to develop his true objective of convincing the reader that Thomas Paine was a failure, a charlatan, a literary incompetent and a rather insipid anti-Christ to say the least. George Chalmers added such picturesque touches as condemning Paine for changing his surname and adding a pretentious "e" to Pain. According to the nineteenth-century biographer, Moncure Daniel Conway, Chalmers himself was guilty of manufacturing a fake academic degree and attaching it to his pseudonym, Francis Oldys, to add prestige to his authorship. In addition, Conway alleged, George Chalmers had never had any contact with the University of Pennsylvania or had ever received a master's degree conferred upon him by this or any other institution of higher learning.² This was a serious

charge against Chalmers and Conway never presented any evidence to corroborate this grave accusation.

Some background information might prove helpful at this time in order to qualify the reasons for the writing of this particular biography while Thomas Paine was very much alive and active in the European political arena. There seems to be little doubt that after Thomas Paine published his political polemic, The Rights of Man, he expected some form of reply or retaliation from the British Government. Even though no formal proclamation of sedition had ensued from the publishing of Part One, some sort of denunciation was momentarily expected. After all, The Rights of Man was a call to arms for the British Isles. They were urged to rebel, abolish the monarchy and establish a republican form of government. The condemnation did not come as Paine anticipated, but the Government was preparing a rebuttal if it proved necessary. Prime Minister William Pitt was carefully watching for a sequel to Part One. On February 16, 1792, Part Two of The Rights of Man was placed on sale. A mere forty-eight hours later a biography of Thomas Paine made its appearance on the bookstalls.³ The Pitt Ministry had purchased the services of a Mr. George Chalmers, A Scottish lawyer who had emigrated to Maryland, remained there until the eve of the American Revolution and then returned to England. He arrived in his homeland a bitter and defiant opponent to all who would support the colonial cause. He attacked both Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox in two pamphlets published in 1777 and 1782. He was employed by the Board of Trade and had received some acclaim as a reliable authority on

British trade through a pamphlet he had written on the subject which had been reprinted several times.⁴

Biographer David F. Hawke suggests that Paine and his comrades dismissed Chalmers as little more than a mere clerk for the Board of Trade. He, actually, was far more than a simple clerk for he was a highly cultured man, respected for his literary accomplishments. He had already authored a book on Shakespeare and a biography of Daniel Defoe as well as editing Defoe's collected works. As a man of delicate, cultivated literary tastes, George Chalmers was incensed by Paine's mishandling of the king's English.⁵ Interestingly enough, he spent over half of his biography on Paine on a line-by-line analysis of both grammatical and syntactical errors as discovered in The Rights of Man.

Without question, the Pitt ministry had subsidized the talents of George Chalmers to search out all the information he could find concerning Paine's past. He was paid 500 pounds by Lord Hawksbury who headed the bureau where he was a clerk.⁶ The job was so complete that practically everything known about the first thirty-seven years of Thomas Paine's life comes from this particular research project. All the failure, the past that Paine had endeavored to put behind him, was dredged up and opened to public inspection.⁷ Here his failures as a husband, excise officer, teacher, preacher and shopkeeper were revealed for discussion and ridicule. The author's aim to discredit Paine's influence in every way possible produced a negative, uncandid and generally abusive calumny. Furthermore, author Chalmers granted little mercy to Paine and whenever possible sought to cast doubts as to his general competency,

perseverance and ability to make friends. For example, while describing a particularly difficult time in Paine's life while in London, Chalmers writes:

Our author, who appears to have had from nature no desire of accumulation, or rather no care for the future, was now reduced to extreme wretchedness. He was absolutely without food, without raiment, and without shelter. Bad, alas! must that man be who finds no friends in London. He met with persons, who, from disinterested kindness, gave him clothes, money, and lodging. Thus he lived till the beginning of July, 1766, when he was restored to the excise. But mere restoration did not bring him present employment, or necessary supplies. And he was about the same time obliged to enter into the service of Mr. Noble, who kept the great Academy in Lemon-street, Goodman's fields, at a salary of twenty pounds a year, with five pounds for finding his own lodging.

Here he continued, teaching English, and waling out with the children, till Christmas, 1766, disliked by the mistress, who still remembers him, and hated by the boys, who were terrified by his hardness.⁸

On the same page, Chalmers made reference to Paine's desire for preaching. This particular reference is the original source of information concerning Thomas Paine's attempt at preaching and obtaining ministerial credentials.

His desire of preaching now returned on him: but applying to his old master for a certificate, to the bishop of London, of his qualifications, Mr. Noble told his former usher, that since he was only an English scholar, he could not recommend him as a proper candidate for ordination in the Church: yet our author determined to persevere in his purpose, without regular orders. And he preached in Moorfields, and in various populous places in England, as he was urged by his necessities, or directed by his spirit. The text, which so emphatically inculcates, meddle not with them that are given to change, we may easily suppose he superficially explained, or seldom enforced.⁹

In regard to this same subject, Paine's effort at preaching, George Chalmers continued in his text when describing his exploits in

Sandwich, "There is a tradition that in his lodging he collected a congregation, to whom he preached as an independent, or a Methodist."¹⁰ Noticeably there is a different choice of words describing the same event as found in the first American edition of Chalmers' Life of Paine published in Boston in 1796. "There is a tradition, that in his lodging he collected a congregation, to whom he preached as an independent, rather than a Methodist."¹¹

The obvious vehement hostility directed toward Thomas Paine and bringing out flaws in his character, was poured out on almost every page of Chalmers' biography. A prime example of this is where Chalmers discussed the incident of financial crisis in the town of Sandwich. Paine and his wife of a few months, Mary Lambert, were forced to liquidate their assets. According to Chalmers Paine auctioned some furniture that was not his, in fact had only been loaned to him. This event, as viewed by George Chalmers, opened the door for a tirade against Paine's seemingly deliberate breaking of English law.

Our author, we fear, committed on this occasion an old crime, which has now a new name. In Henry VIIIth's days, he who obtained another's property by false tokens, was punished by pillory, as a cheat. In George IIId.'s reign, persons convicted of obtaining goods by false pretences, were to be transported, as swindlers. What a fine opportunity for our metaphysical statesmen to discuss, not so much our author's practice as our author's principles. Had Thomas Paine been indicted at the Old Bailey, he might have insisted, as he now insists, that the laws of England did not exist; and that the judges did not sit on the bench. The court would have been reduced to the dilemma of either sending him to Bedlam, or to Bridewell; or of proceeding with the trial, and adjudging the guilty culprit to the colonies, or the cart's tail.¹²

One final and classic illustration of deliberate character assassination on the part of biographer Chalmers was exemplified by his comments about Paine's lying and making a false entry on the license for his second marriage.

Before our author could have obtained his marriage license, he swore that he was a bachelor when he knew he was a widower, if indeed his first wife were deceased.

Now, the statute, except the Marriage-act, which some consider as an infringement of men's rights and women's rights, declares it to be felony, without benefit of clergy, wilfully to make a false entry on the register, with intention to defeat the salutary purposes of recording truth, discriminating characters, and ascertaining property. Yet, our author, however he may use other men's goods as his own, whatever he may think of the sacredness of oaths, however he may regard the integrity of registers, can easily plead, that since he never consented to be bound by what the nation had solemnly enacted, he cannot be guilty: a doctrine which is convenient indeed to him, however, injurious to the people, whose property and whose happiness are secured by fair dealing and honest practice; by the sanction of oaths, and the authenticity of records.¹³

As George Chalmers resurrected the formerly interred bones of Thomas Paine's past it is significant that his drinking problem was not mentioned in the first edition. It was a well-known fact that Thomas Paine frequented many a tavern in search for an atmosphere of congenial fellowship and that he often used alcohol as a relaxant. As to the question of excessive drinking, apparently few people believed he drank too much at this time. Had this been an observable problem author Chalmers would have taken great pleasure in discussing this particular defect in Paine's character. The evidence seems to indicate that the heavy drinking accusation became a reality, or, at least, he began to drink more than usual with the public exposure of

his past. By the time later editions were printed, George Chalmers included this fresh ammunition to further discredit Mr. Paine's reputation.¹⁴

As is easily discernable, George Chalmers' Life of Paine was clearly an intentional defamation of character, the first and perhaps the most damaging of Paine's biographies. Regardless of the obvious scurrilous attack on Thomas Paine and his character, the wealth of information about the first thirty-seven years of his life can be found in no other source and this in itself makes it invaluable reading for the student of Thomas Paine.

The reaction to this first biography was varied. It sold well among those individuals who were elated with the prospect of reading such an exposé. Before the year was over the book had been reprinted five times.¹⁵ All the embarrassing facts about Thomas Paine were now public record and no one hesitated to use this as ammunition against the man and his principles.

The biography did harm Paine's reputation and ultimately most of his exposed faults were flaunted before him either face to face, in print, or whispered behind his back. The objective the English Government had in mind was never realized because the Chalmers exposé had no detrimental effect on the sale of The Rights of Man. The Paine polemic continued to be as popular as ever.¹⁶ Thus the expectations of the Pitt Ministry in stopping this dangerous influence were not fulfilled at this time.

George Chalmers closed his biographical study with the following statement: "Biography treats only the past. Prophecy alone can

reveal the future. And as we are not prophets, we will not conjecture with regard to our author's subsequent life and fate."¹⁷

A fitting tribute or postscript to the Chalmers biography was the fact that five years later (1796) the British Government again subsidized the services of Mr. Chalmers. This time he was commissioned to write a reply to Thomas Paine's Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance. As in the previous case, Mr. Paine's influence continued as neither of the two Government commissioned pamphlets were effected to any marked degree.¹⁸ From this moment George Chalmers' name no longer appears to challenge Thomas Paine's influence in England. However, the Chalmers-Oldys specter would continue to remain in the background, hauntingly reminding Thomas Paine of past failures, faded glory and public ridicule.

James Cheetham was the second biographer of Thomas Paine. Only months after Paine's demise in 1809, editor Cheetham published his vengeful vituperation entitled The Life of Thomas Paine. Like his predecessor, George Chalmers, Cheetham proved to be another of Paine's nemeses, those avenging angels whose clear objective was to abase the name and discredit the influence and memory of their chosen target.

Mr. Cheetham was born in England and had previously been employed in the hatter's trade in the city of Manchester. Moncure D. Conway commented that James Cheetham probably would have remained in that respectable occupation if it had not been for Thomas Paine.¹⁹ It was Paine's The Rights of Man that enticed hatter Cheetham into trying his hand at political writing. Later, having been convinced that he had a most promising career in political, literary disputation, James Cheetham

emigrated to the United States. He settled in the city of New York and became the editor of The American Citizen Magazine.²⁰

Shortly after Thomas Paine's return to the United States in 1802, another fateful meeting between master and disciple took place. On March 18, 1803, Thomas Paine was given a testimonial dinner at the City Hall in New York. All the leading Republican figures of New York were there to honor their distinguished guest. Among those attending was the English radical journalist, a newly prominent presence in the Republican ranks, Mr. James Cheetham.²¹

This was actually a second encounter between these two men, Paine and Cheetham. According to biographer Cheetham, the first meeting occurred, in the company of George Clinton, earlier in 1802. George Clinton and editor Cheetham called upon Thomas Paine while he was residing in the Lovett Hotel in New York. Biographer Cheetham describes the incident in detail.

We rapped at the door: a small figure opened it within, meanly dressed, having on an old top coat without an under one; a dirty silk handkerchief, loosely thrown around his neck; a long beard of more than a week's growth; a face well carbuncled, firey as the setting sun, and the whole figure staggering under a load of inebriation.

Scarcely a word would he allow us to speak. He always, I afterwards found, in all companies, drunk or sober, would be listened to, but in this regard there were no rights of men with him, no equality, no reciprocal immunities and obligations, for he would listen to no one.²²

This vivid description of the first encounter was, of course, recorded some years later in the Paine biography and by that time the hatred and bitterness toward Thomas Paine was deeply etched in James Cheetham's consciousness. Undoubtedly, the incident was "blown out of proportion" in Cheetham's mind when he recited the memory in the biography.

The Paine-Cheetham feud began, according to biographer Moncure D. Conway, when Paine became convinced that editor Cheetham, whose literary medium, The American Citizen, he had used on many occasions, was betraying the Jeffersonian party and its principles while openly enjoying their patronage.²³ The twentieth-century biographers, Alfred O. Aldridge and David F. Hawke, were not in agreement with Conway's allegation because in their estimation the prime reason for the feud was the fact that James Cheetham had the audacity to have altered some of the wording in Paine's essays and letters when they were published in The American Citizen.²⁴

Professor Hawke discussed this feud in greater detail and stated that in June, 1807, James Cheetham became Thomas Paine's principal target. Only a year and a half before, editor Cheetham had made a mistake and "tampered with the master's prose."²⁵ Rapidly, a feud developed and was further complicated by a great amount of name-calling on the part of both participants. Thomas Paine labeled editor Cheetham a traitor and a disgrace to the Republican cause, and Cheetham retaliated with coarse remarks leveled at his character and perpetual drunkenness.²⁶ Undoubtedly, the foundation was now carefully laid for the full thrust of editor Cheetham's resentment and quest for revenge against his former idol. This personal vendetta came to a climax in 1809 when James Cheetham's biography was published. The recently buried Thomas Paine was unable to defend himself.

The purpose of James Cheetham's biographical study of Thomas Paine was briefly stated as follows: "The object of my labour is neither to please nor to displease any political party. I have written the life of

Mr. Paine, not his panegyrick."²⁷ This objective seems innocent enough from a surface glance; however, after a few pages the true colors are easily distinguished. Author Cheetham, who used the earlier Chalmers-Oldys biography as one of his main sources, continued the attack on Thomas Paine, the man, and Thomas Paine, the political analyst. The reference to Mr. Paine's habitual drunkenness was one means of conveniently assaulting the credibility of his target. He used this drunkenness charge to berate Paine's ability to think, much less produce a distinguished piece of writing.²⁸ Because of his constant intoxicated condition "wildness naturally followed this drunkenness and begat a commotion of thoughts," Cheetham explained, and the result was "his despicable work, The Rights of Man."²⁹

By far the most scathing attacks were those made against Thomas Paine's character. Typical of the George Chalmers' tactics that he emulated, James Cheetham's defamation of character plan was thoroughly saturated with personal venom and hatred. Many of those slanderous tales that for years continued to haunt the memory of Thomas Paine had their origin in Cheetham. The accusation of habitual drunkenness, never paying debts, immorality, low and vulgar habits were mercilessly leveled against Mr. Paine by the avenging former disciple, James Cheetham.³⁰ Some of the slanderous remarks, however, went too far and the author was brought before the judge's bench. Madame Marguerite de Bonneville, having been accused by James Cheetham of participating in a clandestine love affair with Thomas Paine while residing in his home along with her two sons, took author Cheetham to court, sued him for slander and won the decision.³¹

Amazingly, author Cheetham paid a sole, rather one-sided, compliment to his enemy when he wrote, "He had read but little in the course of his life, much less than may be supposed, but that little he had sorted, laid up in his intellectual storehouse with care, and could deal it out with facility and discrimination, which, however hated or despised, or on whatever account, was truly admirable."³²

Biographer Cheetham devoted almost thirty pages to an introductory chapter on the life of Thomas Paine and after proceeding to an over two-hundred-and-eighty page critical dissection upon Paine's major works, he concluded his biographical account with the following statement which is the most devastating example of character assassination in the entire text.

Of his moral character, nothing, perhaps, can be added to the facts which have already been stated. His conduct toward his wife were sufficient to blast the memory of a man in all other respects virtuous; but Paine had no good qualities. Incapable of friendship, he was vain, envious, malignant; in France cowardly, and everywhere tyrannical. In his private dealings he was unjust, never thinking of paying for what he can contracted, and always cherishing deadly resentments against those who by law compelled him to do justice. To those who had been kind to him he was more than ungrateful, for to ingratitude, as in the case of Mr. Monroe, he added mean and detestable fraud. He was guilty of the worse species of seduction; the alienation of a wife and children from a husband and father. Filthy and drunken, he was a compound of all the vices.³³

When Thomas Paine died on June 8, 1809, James Cheetham began immediately to collect material for the biography. Before the end of the year the book was published and James Cheetham tasted the first fruits of sweet revenge. Without Thomas Paine around to come to his

own defense, author Cheetham achieved his goal. He portrayed his victim in a manner that would long be remembered in America, Paine, the drunkard and the atheist. The nation might tolerate the drunkard, but as history revealed it took far longer to forgive the atheist.³⁴ As for the reaction in England to both the Chalmers-Oldys and Cheetham biographies, those individuals who sought a further excuse to hate and vilify the man and his labors were now supplied with additional fuel for their passionate contest against all expressions of radical thought and action.

The antithesis to the antagonistic biographical efforts of George Chalmers and James Cheetham appeared in a new Life of Thomas Paine by Thomas Clio Rickman. Where authors Chalmers and Cheetham introduced the "black legend" about the infidel Tom Paine, Clio Rickman endeavored to reverse the tide of condemnation and practically sanctify the memory of his old friend and comrade.³⁵

If Thomas Paine could have claimed one truly close friend during the latter years of his life, Thomas Clio Rickman would have been his choice. Clio Rickman was a resident of Lewes where Thomas Paine was once stationed as an officer in the excise. He was only a youth in the Lewes of Paine's time, but years later a devoted comradeship developed between the two men. Later when Rickman became such an enthusiastic devotee of the cause of revolution he named his sons in succession: Paine, Washington, Franklin, Rousseau, Petrarch and Volney.³⁶

According to biographer Moncure D. Conway, Thomas Paine first met Thomas Clio Rickman while in Lewes. Young Rickman was already

recognized as somewhat of a musical genius in Lewes and, for some undetermined reason, had been nicknamed "Clio" by his admirers. On one occasion, it has been told, Clio Rickman delighted Excise Officer Paine by setting one of his poem-songs to music and this, perhaps, is where their friendship first began.³⁷

Biographer Audrey Williamson agreed with Moncure Conway's thesis that Paine and Rickman undoubtedly were close friends in later years. However, Ms. Williamson made it quite clear that Thomas Rickman was born on July 27, 1761, and therefore was only seven years old when Thomas Paine moved to Lewes. He would have been only twelve or thirteen when Paine left the city. With these facts in mind it would be quite difficult to believe a serious comradeship between a grown man and only a child would have developed at this time. Ms. Williamson concluded with her comment to the effect that the close, intellectual relationship and bond of friendship began much later when Thomas Paine lived in the home of the now adult bookseller and publisher Clio Rickman. While living there in 1792 Thomas Paine wrote most of his manuscript for Part Two of The Rights of Man.³⁸

In describing Clio Rickman, author Williamson used a sketch taken from a book entitled Lewes Men of Note which said that he (Rickman) was "extremely well educated, a good classical scholar, and well acquainted with the French language."³⁹ Ms. Williamson then added her own observation that concerning the last two qualifications Clio Rickman certainly eclipsed Thomas Paine. Perhaps Thomas Paine absorbed much of his knowledge in classical literature from Clio Rickman.⁴⁰

This, however, was only conjecture on her part.

One truth is evident and every Paine biographer readily admits that there was a loyal and intimate friendship cemented between Thomas Paine and Clio Rickman which lasted throughout Paine's life. Noticeably, it was from the pen of his comrade, Clio Rickman, that the first amicable biography was composed.

In 1819, bookseller-publisher Clio Rickman published his biography. Even though this Life was little more than a sketch when compared to the textual length of both the Chalmers and Cheetham accounts, it was the first pro-Paine treatment to come off the printer's press. This Life expressed profound indignation for the scandalous preceding testimonies. In the second and third pages of his book, Clio Rickman made clear reference to the work of his predecessors in the following manner:

The Life of Mr. Paine by Francis Oldys was written seventeen years before Mr. Paine's death; and was in fact, drawn up by a person employed by a certain lord, and who was to have five hundred pounds for the job, if he calumniated and belied him to his lordship's and the Ministry's satisfaction.

A continuation of this Life, printed at Philadelphia in 1796, is in the same strain as the above, and equally contemptible. . . .

Mr. James Cheetham's Life of Mr. Paine, published at New York after Mr. Paine's death in 1809, is a farrago of still more silly, trifling, false and malicious matter. It is an outrageous attack upon Paine which bears upon the face of it, idle gossiping and gross misrepresentation.⁴¹

Author Clio Rickman then continued to criticize James Cheetham's biography and introduced the purpose for his own memoirs:

The Life by Cheetham is so palpably written to distort, disfigure, mislead, and vilify, and does this so bunglingly, that it defeats its own purposes, and becomes entertaining from the excess of its labored and studied defamation.

It is indeed 'guilt's blunder,' and subverts all it was intended to accomplish. It is filled with long details of uninteresting American matter, bickering letters of obscure individuals, gossiping stories of vulgar fanatics, prejudiced political cant and weak observations on theology.

I may be supposed, from my long and affectionate intercourse with Mr. Paine, that these memoirs will have an opposite bias, and portray a too flattering and exalted character of him.

To this I reply, that I am not disposed to advocate the errors or irregularities of any man, however intimate with him, nor to suffer the partialities of friendship to prevent the due appreciation of character, or induce me to disregard the hallowed dictates of truth.⁴²

Clio Rickman had been forced earlier to denounce the slanderous portrayal of Thomas Paine by Mr. Cheetham. In a letter addressed to "Politicus" in the Universal Magazine, December, 1811, Clio Rickman explained his position in that he was indeed negligent in not having completed his own Life of Paine. He stated that he had "the memoirs of that truly wise and good man in a great state of forwardness about a year ago; but a series of most severe and dreadful family distresses since that time have rendered me incapable of completing them."⁴³ His remarks about Mr. Cheetham were direct and to the point, depicting comrade Paine's former devotee turned enemy. "Unhappily, Cheetham is the real name of the real apostate. He lived, when Mr. Paine was my inmate in 1792, at Manchester, and was a violent and furious idolater of his."⁴⁴ This statement along with the reference in the introductory pages of his Life of Paine ended the mentioning of Mr. Cheetham's name per se.

After making his objective very clear to the reader, Clio Rickman turned to the challenge and set about to deliberately discredit

previous slanderous remarks against Thomas Paine and his character. For instance, where Mr. Cheetham had pictured Paine as a filthy, ill-dressed, drunken sot, Clio Rickman impressed a totally different portrait in the eyes of the beholder.

Mr. Paine in his person was about five feet ten inches high; and rather athletic; he was broadshouldered, and latterly stooped a little.

His eye, of which the painter could not convey the exquisite meaning, was full, brilliant, and singularly piercing; it had in it the 'muse of fire.' In his dress and person he was generally very cleanly, and wore his hair cued, with side curls, and powdered, so that he looked altogether like a gentleman of the old French school.

His manners were easy and gracious; his knowledge was universal and boundless; in private company and among friends his conversation had every fascination that anecdote, novelty and truth could give it. In mixed company and among strangers he said little, and was no public speaker.⁴⁵

When reacting to the charge of Thomas Paine's habitual drunkenness, author Rickman substituted his own comments which were designed to soothe and gloss over the question and place the blame elsewhere.

In this place it is absolutely necessary to observe that during his residence with me in London, in and about the year 1792, and in the course of his life previous to that time, he was not in the habit of drinking to excess; he was clean in his person, and in his manners polite and engaging; and ten years after this, when I was with him in France, he did not drink spirits, and wine he took moderately; he even objected to any spirits being laid in as a part of his sea stock, observing to me, that though sometimes, borne down by public and private affliction, he had been driven to excesses in Paris, the cause and effect would cease together, and that in America he should live as he liked, and as he ought to live.

That Mr. Paine had his failings is as true as that he was a man, and that some of them grew on him at a very advanced time of life, arising from the circumstances before detailed, there can be no doubt: but to magnify these, to give him vices he had not, and seek only occasions of misrepresenting and vilifying his character, without bringing forward the great and good traits in it, is cruel, unkind, and unjust.⁴⁶

Clio Rickman took up the gauntlet against those attacks that challenged Thomas Paine's literary prowess. When his style was assaulted by enemies in literary and political circles, biographer Rickman retorted, casting doubt as to their credibility to discern good literature.

It is true, he never studied variety of phrase at the expense of perspicuity. His object was to enlighten, not to dazzle; and often, for the sake of more forcibly impressing an idea on the mind of the reader, he has made use of verbal repetitions which to a fastidious ear may perhaps sound unmusical. But although, in the opinion of some, his pages may be deficient in elegance, few will deny that they are copious in matter; and, if they sometimes fail to tickle the ear, they will never fail to fill the mind.⁴⁷

One of the longest statements made by Mr. Rickman in his memoirs of Thomas Paine was to reply to the label of infidelity that had been attached to Paine after the publishing of The Age of Reason. As a retaliation to this obvious misunderstanding of Thomas Paine's religious philosophy, Mr. Rickman spent several pages defining deism and why being a deist did not imply that one were also automatically an atheist. He then carefully explained that Thomas Paine had made no deathbed confession recanting his anti-Christian position. "On the eight of June, 1809, about nine in the morning, he placidly, and almost without a struggle, died, as he had lived, a Deist."⁴⁸

In the concluding pages of his biography Clio Rickman lauded Thomas Paine for his stand against ignorance of any kind, whether in politics or in religion. Finally, as an epitaph, the old friend and comrade reappraised the virtues and talents of the man he loved and admired, leaving the impression that he should be accepted for his creativity and charity which covered "a multitude of sins."

While Mr. Paine's enemies have labored, and are still laboring, to detect vices and errors in his life and manners, shall not his friends dwell on the immense good he had done in public life, on the happiness he has created for myriads, in private? Shall they not point to the abodes of delight and comfort, where live and flourish the blessings of domestic bliss; affection's dear intercourses, friendship's solaces, and love's sacred enjoyments? And there are millions of such abodes originating in his labors. Why seek occasion, surly critics and detractors! to maltreat and misrepresent Mr. Paine? He was mild, unoffending, sincere, gentle, humble, and unassuming; his talents were soaring, acute, profound, extensive and original; and he possessed that charity, which covers a multitude of sins.⁴⁹

Within a few months of each other, three sympathetic accounts of Thomas Paine's life appeared in London bookstalls. Thomas Clío Rickman's biography was published in May, 1819; W. T. Sherwin's Life in August, 1819; and Richard Carlile's effort in November of the next year. The second member of the above-mentioned trio remains relatively unknown to students of Thomas Paine. Although W. T. Sherwin was a well-known London publisher and editor for a short period of time, most biographers pass him by, giving him little or no attention. Perhaps one of the main reasons for this lack of consideration is due to the great difficulty in obtaining copies of his biography of Paine. However, the Huguenot-Thomas Paine Historical Association in New Rochelle, New York, is one of those rare places where one might locate a copy of this work.

Professor Harrison T. Meserole, in his article "W. T. Sherwin: A Little-known Paine Biographer," presented some information about this relatively obscure biographer. One of the salient points introduced in the Meserole article was the fact that all three biographers,

Rickman, Carlile and Sherwin, were associated with one another on more than one occasion. Where W. T. Sherwin was the founder and editor of the Weekly Political Register, contributor Clio Rickman wrote many articles, poems and memorials to the memory of Thomas Paine that were published in the Register during the years 1817 to 1819.⁵⁰ At that time Richard Carlile, a friend and junior partner of W. T. Sherwin, was an apprentice and first practiced his craft on the Sherwin Register. When editor-publisher Sherwin surrendered the editorship in 1819, Richard Carlile filled the vacancy and changed the name of the weekly to the Republican. Clio Rickman, in turn, supplied editor Carlile with additional memorials and tributes for the Republican from 1819 to 1826.⁵¹ Thus the close association of these three Paine devotees was easily discernable in London literary and journalistic circles.

W. T. Sherwin's father held the position of keeper of the Southwell Bridewell Prison in Northamptonshire. Young Sherwin was merely fourteen years of age when his father died; but, because of previous clerical experience, he was appointed to his father's position and remained there through 1816.⁵²

It was during this period that W. T. Sherwin began to read the works of Thomas Paine. He rapidly became so captivated with Paine's political philosophy that he presumed to write a political pamphlet of his own. The London publishers, apparently, rejected publishing this first polemic because it was simply too enthusiastic for even zealous, crusading editors.⁵³ Young Sherwin, fully realizing that he would have to do his own printing if he were to ever publish, left the

illustrious post of keeper of that infamous House of Correction, Southwell's Bridewell, and moved to London in search of a printing press. In the spring of 1817 he rented part of the premises at 183 Fleet Street and in April published his first periodical, the Republican. After the short span of six weeks he changed the name of the Republican to that of the Weekly Political Register.⁵⁴

On March 21 of the following year, editor Sherwin announced that he would be writing a life of Thomas Paine, which he planned to publish in May or June. In the same issue he requested that anyone "who may have been acquainted with Paine, or who may know anything of his conduct or character," to contact him as soon as possible.⁵⁵ Evidently there was little or no response to his informational summons for he later reported that his Life of Paine had to be postponed for the moment.

A short notice appeared in a rival Republican weekly on April 14, 1819. This periodical, the Black Dwarf, was edited by Thomas Jonathan Wooler. Editor Wooler announced that Clio Rickman was about to publish his long-postponed memoirs of Thomas Paine. In the same notice, Mr. Wooler added that Mr. Rickman "from personal acquaintance with Mr. Paine, has had the best opportunity of compiling the materials."⁵⁶

This particular observation aroused the anger of editor Sherwin and provided the spark for an interesting conflict between W. T. Sherwin on one side and editor Wooler and author Rickman on the other side. The incensed W. T. Sherwin proceeded then to accuse his competitor of amassing information illegally, at the expense of Sherwin himself. In an

article in the Register on April 17, he stated that he procured considerable information about Mr. Paine's history up to 1802 and sought to complete his knowledge by writing to a friend of his in the United States. He asked his friend to send any materials he could gather that might enlighten the events of Thomas Paine's last few years in America. Editor Sherwin continued, "In a few months afterwards I was informed by the father of this gentleman that a parcel had arrived for me by the Radius, inclosed in another parcel, directed to Mr. Wooler."⁵⁷ Apparently, two packets of letters arrived on two different ships and several of the letters to W. T. Sherwin had been placed in the Wooler packet. When Mr. Sherwin asked Mr. Wooler if he had received any letters addressed to him, Wooler replied that he had not. Editor Sherwin immediately charged Mr. Wooler with having turned over information meant for his personal use to Clio Rickman. In turn, Mr. Rickman must have used these papers as a basis for his memoirs of Thomas Paine.

Thomas Wooler was enraged by Sherwin's indictment against his integrity and on April 21 he published his rebuttal to the charges. He accused Mr. Sherwin of "the most unfounded calumny, and the most barefaced falsehood, that it was possible for cowardice and malignity to devise."⁵⁸

The two bitter antagonists agreed to meet with two disinterested parties for some attempt at a settlement of their grievances. However, nothing came of this meeting and for the next few months insults and recriminations were printed in the Register and the Black Dwarf. The climax was reached on May 5 when Thomas Wooler charged

W. T. Sherwin "with deliberate slander, malicious falsehood, and gross impudence."⁵⁹ As further proof of his innocence, editor Wooler quoted Clio Rickman as having finished his biography shortly after the death of Thomas Paine and without having added to it since its completion. Clio Rickman also denied any knowledge of receiving the manuscripts which Mr. Sherwin accused both him and Wooler of receiving.

Editor Sherwin never replied to these latest charges, but early in the summer he suspended publishing the Register. Richard Carlile gave the only clue as to why Sherwin suddenly retreated from the rousing journalistic debate. He explained that W. T. Sherwin got married at this time and turned the Register over to him, "to continue it, or take it up again under whatever title [Carlile] should think best."⁶⁰

The obvious result was that the battle subsided as quickly as it had begun. The last word on the subject came on February 16, 1820, when editor Wooler published a letter from William Clark, the man who had been Mr. Sherwin's correspondent in the United States. Mr. Clark noted his own neglect in not addressing the parcels properly. He stated that he had written Mr. Sherwin concerning this to the effect that the unpleasant situation was his fault entirely and that Thomas Wooler was not to blame. Mr. Clark had neglected to insert Sherwin's name on the packet, so editor Wooler was justified in believing the letters were for his own use. He concluded, "When, on their delivery to him the other morning, I explained the cause of your conduct and shewed him the letter in which I thought I had inserted his name, but which was omitted, he seemed satisfied you were not in the least blameable. Trusting that this will be sufficient to clear you from any

imputation, and that Mr. Sherwin and you will forget your past dissensions."⁶¹ Thus ended the "battle of the books" and all three biographies were published without further complications within months of one another.

As to the biography written by W. T. Sherwin, nothing new was added to the already established facts of Thomas Paine's life and career. However, author Sherwin was able to add some hitherto unpublished Paine correspondence which provided some interest to his readers. Memoirs of the Life of Thomas Paine was a highly sympathetic account which endeavored to portray Paine as a hero with the same flaws as any other human being. W. T. Sherwin, however, alluded to the greatness of Paine as a political philosopher and analyst. Consequently, the biography was basically a compilation of Paine's major treatises and letters. Although little fresh information was forthcoming in this biographical account, it was certainly an ably written effort for a young man of only nineteen years of age. As far as his use of resource materials, Sherwin endeavored to mention his sources whenever possible and many footnotes are to be found in his text.

The Sherwin biography, however, did not prove to be as lucrative in its sales as was the rival Clio Rickman account. In fact, W. T. Sherwin went through bankruptcy proceedings as announced in the London Gazette on March 5, 1822. The following year on April 5, 1823, the action was completed and Mr. Sherwin's creditors divided what was left of the estate in London. It is at this point that W. T. Sherwin dropped completely out of sight. Richard Carlile added his comments

that Sherwin and his wife left London for Northamptonshire. Whatever the circumstances, W. T. Sherwin's name no longer appeared in association with any contemporary journals or periodicals. Perhaps he had suffered enough from his brief interlude in the publishing world and simply retired to the countryside away from the notorious past, unpleasant memories and faded dreams of his London adventures.⁶²

Richard Carlile's biography, The Life of Thomas Paine, Written Purposely to Bind with his Writings, introduced no additional material concerning Paine's life, character and career. The book was merely supplemental in that it confirmed facts that had already been established in earlier biographies. Editor Carlile's treatment, like that of his associate Clio Rickman, was pro-Paine and highly partisan.

In 1819, a year before the publishing of his biography, Mr. Carlile compiled and printed an edition of Thomas Paine's political works. The introductory chapter in this particular compilation was without a doubt a prelude to the later biography. The "Introduction" covered in a little over thirty pages those salient points Mr. Carlile was to stress in his forthcoming effort. The student of Thomas Paine can certainly benefit by studying this brief, more concise biographical sketch of Paine's character and influence.

Editor-printer Richard Carlile had purposed to publish a compilation of Paine's political works including a short biographical sketch "so that the reader might at the same time be furnished with a key to the Author's mind, principles, and works."⁶³ Under the façade of a semblance of objectivity, he continued:

On such an occasion it does not become the Compiler to seek after either the adulation of friends, or the slander of enemies; it is equally unnecessary to please or perplex the reader with either, for when an author has passed the bar of nature, it behooves us not to listen to any tales about what he was, or what he did, but to form our judgments of the utility or non-utility of his life, by the writings he has left behind him.⁶⁴

He further justified his desire to present a clear and accurate representation of the authentic Thomas Paine by stating,

Our business is with the spirit or immortal part of the man, if his writings be calculated to render him immortal, we have nothing to do with the body that is earthy and corruptible, and passes away into the common mass of regenerating matter. Whilst the man is living, we are justified in prying into his actions to see whether his example corresponds with his precept, but when dead, his writings must stand or fall by the test of reason and its influence on public opinion.⁶⁵

Perhaps the only observable departure from the partisan enthusiasm so exemplified in the approach of fellow biographers, Clio Rickman and W. T. Sherwin, was in Mr. Carlile's bluntness and lack of diplomacy in describing his feelings toward those he considered to have been antagonists and vilifiers of the name and character of Thomas Paine. For example, he determined to place the blame for inaction on the release of Thomas Paine from his imprisonment in the Luxembourg on the real enemy, in Carlile's eyes, John Adams. The American Minister to France, Gouverneur Morris, who was usually accepted by biographers as the villain behind the long incarceration in that infamous French prison, was not even mentioned by author Carlile. Instead, he poured out his own brand of venom by stating that John Adams was the hidden felon behind the obvious lack of attention to Thomas Paine's cries for aid and release from his shackled condition.

He labelled Adams as "altogether a puerile character, and totally unfit for any part of a Republican Government."⁶⁶ President George Washington who, in Richard Carlile's mind, could have through his interference saved prisoner Paine from several months of unjust incarceration, was passed aside with this comment, "I am of opinion that one Paine is worth a thousand Washingtons in point of utility to mankind."⁶⁷

Crusader Carlile was not afraid to assault the integrity of his own countrymen either. He called Edmund Burke a "viper" and lambasted the Pitt Ministry in the process. It was his contention that Edmund Burke, who had been Thomas Paine's intimate friend and confidant, had sold out to the Pitt regime and had become their "spy." Author Carlile vividly depicted this Pitt-Burke unholy alliance in the following manner:

Pitt, the most insidious and most destructive man that ever swayed the affairs of England, saw the necessity of tampering with Burke, and found him venal. It was agreed between them that Burke should receive a pension in a fictitious name, but outwardly continue his former character, the better to learn the dispositions of the leaders of the opposition, as to the principles they might imbibe from the American revolution, and the approaching revolution in France. This was the masterpiece of Pitt's policy, he brought up all the talent that was opposed to his measures, but instead of requiring a direct support, he made such persons continue as spies on their former associates, and thus was not only informed of all that was passing, but, by his agents, was enabled to stifle every measure that was calculated to effect him, by interposing the advice of his bribed opponents and pseudo-patriots. ⁶⁸

This description of the great apostasy of Edmund Burke over to the villainous William Pitt and his associates was then used as

a vehicle for a personal tirade against English censorship and pressure.

The laws of England have been a great bar to the propagation of sound principles and useful lessons of Government, for whatever might have been the disposition and abilities of the authors, they have been compelled to limit that disposition and those abilities, to the disposition and abilities of the publisher. Thus it has been difficult for a bold and honest man to find a bold and honest publisher; even in the present day it continues to be the same, and the only effectual way of going to work is, for every author to turn printer and publisher as well.⁶⁹

It was because of such stinging verbal aggression against the English Government, religion and those individuals he designated to be Thomas Paine's former enemies that Mr. Carlile quickly cultivated the reputation as perhaps the most outspoken disciple and defender during the early nineteenth century.⁷⁰

The Richard Carlile biographical studies, as suggested earlier, added little to the already established wealth of information about Thomas Paine. In spite of this, however, Mr. Carlile is an important historical figure in his own right. This openly declared deist and revolutionary spirit, more than either Clio Rickman or W. T. Sherwin, most closely resembled Thomas Paine and his ideology in action for Richard Carlile appeared to be the personification of Paine's principles in the flesh.

Although editor Carlile did not agree with Paine's theological opinions, in fact, he actively opposed them, for he was far more vehement in his personal attacks against institutionalized Christianity than Thomas Paine had ever been. He, like many other free-thinkers, believed Paine to have been too cautious, not having gone

far enough in his battle against Christian orthodoxy and the Holy Scriptures.⁷¹ Even with this difference of opinion, Richard Carlile still remained Thomas Paine's most devoted follower.

Guy A. Aldred in his biography, Richard Carlile, Agitator: His Life and Times, portrayed editor Carlile as a revolutionist "par excellence." He not only published Thomas Paine's The Rights of Man and other political polemics considered seditious by the British Government, but he also printed an edition of The Age of Reason in vindication of the freedom of the press.

In conclusion, if one of those requirements for a true revolutionary spirit was the number of times one was incarcerated, Richard Carlile was certainly a revolutionist. The postscript at the end of Mr. Aldred's text is nothing more than a list of the imprisonments of Richard Carlile. In 1817, publisher Carlile spent eighteen weeks in the Compter Prison for selling copies of the Parodies on the Book of Common Prayer. From November 16, 1819, to November 18, 1825, Richard Carlile spent some three years in prison for selling Thomas Paine's The Age of Reason and Elihu Palmer's Principles of Nature. Three more years were exacted at this time for non-payment of a fine of 1,100 pounds. This time he was incarcerated in the Dorchester Gaol. Mr. Carlile was back in the Compter from 1831 to 1833 for publishing an article in the Prompter during the Agriculture Riots. Finally, in 1834, he spent an additional four months sentence for resisting Church Assessments. The total time that Richard Carlile spent in prison was nine years, seven months and one week.⁷²

This fact alone made Richard Carlile one of the most interesting and unique personalities concerned with the memoirs of Thomas Paine.

John Harford was the final author to produce a major biography of Thomas Paine in the early decades of the nineteenth century. His treatment of Paine was clearly indicated in the Preface of the text. He offered no excuses for his antagonistic personal opinion, and did not pretend objectivity in his handling of the controversial Mr. Paine. In fact, John Harford expressed his purpose quite concisely in that his book was an answer to Richard Carlile and other radicals of like persuasion who had recently professed Mr. Paine as their hero of liberty and conscience.

If the success of the present writer is to be measured by his admiration, he fears that his book will meet with a very discouraging reception. Certainly nothing would have tempted him to touch upon the history of a man whose very name is proverbial for infamy, had he not, in common with the great body of his countrymen, witnessed, with indignation, the impudent attempts lately made, in various ways, to confront the system of Paine with Christianity; in other words, to oppose the kingdom of Darkness, Sin and Contention, to that of Light, Purity and Love.⁷³

Author Harford now passed the attack directly to the person of Richard Carlile.

The cheap form in which the impious Carlile, subsequently to his conviction, has again printed the Age of Reason is the body of his trial, in outrageous defiance of public feeling, and the industry with which it has been circulated; united to the newspaper reports of the proceedings at the prosecution, have given, of late an unusual currency to the name and opinions of Paine. The Radical Reformers are also grown bold enough to acknowledge him as their Apostle and their idol. It therefore becomes a duty to expose the wickedness of this man's principles, and the corresponding enormity of his life.

Here and there, even among persons professing Christianity, a doubt has been suggested as to the propriety

of such prosecutions as that of Mr. Carlile under any circumstances; but such objectors lose sight of the material difference which exists between a respectful inquiry into the evidences of Christianity and a ribaldrous attack upon it.⁷⁴

Thus stated, biographer John Harford then set about his task to discredit Thomas Paine and all he represented in every sense of the word. The biography was not intended to include subtle insinuations, but rather to publicly decry that "infamous infidel" Tom Paine.

Author Harford wrote of his indebtedness to James Cheetham, whose biography on Paine was his main source of reference. He also admitted to a comparison-contrast study of the two "Lives" written by James Cheetham and William Cobbett.

The Harford treatment delegated few pages to Thomas Paine's experiences in America. The excuse given for this obvious neglect was that James Cheetham had covered this period well enough. Therefore, the years Mr. Paine spent in Britain and France were stressed in the Harford account.

The character assassination began early (on page 2) when John Harford made some random comments about the Paine marriage separation: "He had proved a wretched husband, and had treated her with such neglect and unkindness, that her life had been rendered truly miserable. From a man of his principles she had no reason to expect any other fate."⁷⁵

The heavy drinking and habitual drunkenness question also made a quick entrance into the running commentary of Paine's character flaws. Mr. Harford, attesting to his objective of exposing the

wickedness of this man and his principles, used no clever subtleties in describing "that he was a most confirmed drunkard, and that the quantity of brandy, which he took daily, would have quickly killed an ordinary man."⁷⁶ The author took advantage of the time Mr. Paine had accumulated a rather large debt to ridicule his personal habits. Thus a shadow of corruption was cast upon everything associated with the name and memory of Thomas Paine: "... his diet was generally the poorest and filthiest, and he lived in holes and corners, so that a mysterious character is suspended over this transaction, and we are left to imagine any thing as the cause, that the depravity, which marked his former career, will warrant."⁷⁷

Whenever an opportunity arose biographer Harford used it to full advantage. For instance, Mr. Paine's personal agonies suffered in the Luxembourg Prison were rebuffed by such statements as "Paine was keenly alive to his own sufferings, though he knew not how to feel for others."⁷⁸ Even the question of the serious illness Paine developed during his incarceration was evaded and camouflaged by author Harford to be reemphasized as just another consequence of the vileness of his personal habits.

During his imprisonment he was attacked by a bad fever, caused by his intemperance. A medical gentleman, who attended him in France, has since declared, that his body was almost in a state of putrefaction, the consequence, in all probability, of constant hard drinking; and so terribly offensive was the stench that issued from it, that he could hardly be approached.⁷⁹

Any vestige of humanitarianism on Paine's part was intentionally ignored. The Paine address before the French Convention to ask

for mercy for Louis XVI was not mentioned in John Harford's account. Instead Thomas Paine was blamed by Mr. Harford for being one of the culprits who introduced Jacobinism into Britain in 1791 where they, "under the assumed name of Patriots and Reformers, began to emulate the French jargon, and to pant for the moment when this happy country should become the scene of anarchy and revolution."⁸⁰

Notwithstanding, John Harford made many personal observations and reflective comments about Thomas Paine's major political works such as The Rights of Man. However, he was one of the first biographers to directly reply to The Age of Reason, presenting an excellent argument, far better composed and clear in proposition than most of the contemporary theologians who endeavored to refute Paine's religious harangue against Christianity and Holy Scripture. There was no question left in the reader's mind after studying the section devoted to exposing Tom Paine as a malicious infidel, because biographer Harford vividly expressed the effects upon Paine for his own apostasy. Avowed Christian, John Harford, pronounced the words of doom on his target, writing that

he lived to see his ignorance exposed, his impertinences chastened, his person hated by those whom he had most praised and most courted, his name consigned to infamy and execration. He lived to be a terror to himself, and a warning to all who approached him.⁸¹

John Harford could not let Tom Paine even depart in peace. After receiving correspondence from Dr. James R. Manly and a nurse who attended the dying man, Harford wrote, "In the expressions and in the conduct of this unhappy man in his latter moments, we behold an

obvious mixture of remorse and terror on the one hand, and on the other of pride and obstinacy."⁸²

The final climactic insults upon the person of Thomas Paine appeared some twenty pages before the actual conclusion of this 102-page defamation. The hatred of Christian crusader John Harford came to the fore; no mercy and no grace were offered.

The character of this man was a compound of all that is most base, disgusting, and wicked, without the relief of any one quality that was great or good. Any feelings of natural affection which he might once have had, appear to have been wholly extinguished by an inordinate spirit of egotism and selfishness, which rendered him incapable of friendship to a single human being. His companions were chiefly low and disreputable persons to whom, while he preached liberty, he acted the despot. None were deemed worthy of being his associates, who made any scruple of regarding him as an oracle, or of submitting to be called, at his will, blockheads or fools. In his private dealings, he was habitually a knave; never willing to pay the most just debts, and always cherishing the most fixed resentment against those who, by law, compelled him to do them justice. He was vain, envious, malignant. His only fixed principle was, hatred to all established order; his only idea of national happiness, political anarchy; his only ardent pleasures, habitual drunkenness and sensuality. Any thing in the shape of goodness was his peculiar aversion, and therefore Christianity, as the perfection of all goodness, was the object of his deadly and envenomed dislike. . . . He wanted a religion brought down to his own ignorance, and which would justify its disciples in the full indulgence of every inordinate appetite, and every depraved passion.--He died, as he lived, hating even his own followers, and hated by them, despising and despised.⁸³

Professor Harry Hayden Clark, who devoted many years to the study of Thomas Paine, called this Harford biography "an unsympathetic account."⁸⁴ Perhaps this is a prime example of the understatement, for the Harford treatment is one of the most venomous and self-righteous attacks and character assassinations to be produced

in the early nineteenth century. No subtle nuance appeared in this book, indeed, the author stated from the very beginning that he intended to destroy Paine and his memory. Neither George Chalmers nor James Cheetham was capable of painting a figure so dark and foreboding, so intrinsically evil as John Harford's attacking the devil incarnate in the form of Thomas Paine and his writings. As to the reaction to this particular biography, no information can be obtained, for Harry Hayden Clark was the only major compiler or biographer who even cited this study by John Harford. Perhaps it appeared to be nothing more than an obvious antithesis to the Carlile, Rickman and Sherwin accounts and was considered too detrimental a treatment of Paine to be seriously accepted.

It is not advisable to leave this discussion of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Paine biographies without mentioning the name of William Cobbett. English journalist Cobbett had been one of Thomas Paine's most vigorous critics during the 1790's. Writing under the pseudonym of Peter Porcupine, William Cobbett attacked Mr. Paine mercilessly through his short biographical sketch entitled The Life of Thomas Paine, which was first published in 1796 in The Political Censor in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.⁸⁵ Unquestionably, visiting journalist Cobbett had been greatly influenced by the Chalmers biography, for his Life was merely a reiteration of the Chalmer's slanderous attack.⁸⁶

According to historians and biographers Mr. Cobbett, whose antagonism toward the United States and Thomas Paine in particular was

well known and attested through the journalistic media, changed his position full circle after reading Paine's The Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance and Agrarian Justice. Even though both of these treatises had been published in 1796 and 1797 respectively, the remarkable Cobbett reversal occurred in 1803. Convert William Cobbett now lauded the Paine effort, expressing that he, Paine, had a full understanding of the dangers within the British economic system. In Mr. Cobbett's own Papers Against Gold, he declared that as a political analyst and economist, Mr. Paine's essay "in the space of 25 pages conveys more useful knowledge on the subject and discovers infinitely greater depth of thought and general powers of the mind, than are to be found in all the pamphlets of the financiers . . . on the money system."⁸⁷ This acknowledgment of Thomas Paine's brilliance caused Cobbett to begin to re-evaluate his attitude toward his former target, and later, when he returned to the United States, he came as a fervent disciple of Thomas Paine and his cause. By 1817 the Peter Porcupine who had lambasted America and her democracy returned "in sackcloth and ashes, singing the praise of this country, its government and its people."⁸⁸ This new proselyte of American democracy reentered as a crusader for human rights, convinced that he had done this country and Thomas Paine a great injustice. He resolved to rectify his great error in judgment.

In the same year he published a second biographical study of Thomas Paine, An Account of the Life, Labors, and Death of Thomas Paine, mostly written in cooperation with Madame Marguerite de Bonneville.

This new treatment proclaimed the truth about the Paine "recantation" myth and brought out evidence to disprove the Mary Hinsdale story that Thomas Paine had recanted his religious sentiments shortly before his death. According to the story Mary Hinsdale, a servant employed by Mr. Paine's Quaker friend, Willet Hicks, had heard him state that "if ever the Devil had an agent on Earth he who wrote The Age of Reason was undoubtedly that person."⁸⁹ William Cobbett, attempting to get at the truth concerning this report, interviewed the girl and found her to have "no recollection of any person or thing she saw at Thomas Paine's house."⁹⁰ Both Willet Hicks and Dr. James R. Manly attested to the fact that Paine had never changed his position toward Christianity, his sentiments were precisely the same as when he wrote The Age of Reason.⁹¹ This fact was declared again in both the biographies written by Richard Carlile and William Sherwin.

Perhaps overcome with a twinge of conscience allied with momentary romanticism, William Cobbett announced that America had too long neglected the memory of Thomas Paine. He then requested permission to disinter Paine's bones. After encountering some difficulty he was granted permission in 1819. This began an interesting postscript to the life, career and death of Thomas Paine. The news about the disinterment caused great excitement in England when the bones arrived on November 21, 1819. The town crier of Bolton was arrested and imprisoned for nine weeks because he publicly announced the arrival of those infamous remains. Both Mr. Cobbett and Mr. Paine were demounced in the halls of Parliament and in the English newspapers.⁹²

Journalist William Cobbett had long been accustomed to public ridicule and, being a courageous individual, he announced his plans for erecting a monument to house the remains of Thomas Paine. At the same time he called for funds to construct this grand mausoleum to his hero's memory. The whole idea was so poorly received that soon he abandoned the thought of subscribing public funds. This did not stop further attempts to bring Mr. Paine's name before the nation. He planned on a testimonial dinner to be held on Paine's birthday, but, again, there was little or no enthusiasm and the plan was forsaken. William Cobbett was forced to admit failure once more when he had locks of Paine's hair soldered into rings. When he offered these tokens up for sale he found no one would buy them. Finally, the noble project to restore the name and memory of Thomas Paine to its rightful place was abandoned. The constant barrage of laughter, insult and ridicule became too much for crusader Cobbett to bear.⁹³

When William Cobbett died on June 18, 1835, his oldest son inherited the farm and remains of Paine that had been carefully packed in a trunk. Six months later when the personal effects of the deceased were sold by the family at auction, the trunk was not included in the sale. The Lord Chancellor had denied the request that the remains be sold as a part of the Cobbett estate. George West, a day laborer, possessed the bones for a time and then turned them over to a Mr. Tilly, who had been William Cobbett's secretary.⁹⁴ There are no records from this point on and what eventually happened to the mortal remains of Thomas Paine is merely conjecture. They may have found a resting place

or have been left to crumble into dust, no one actually knows. So the ignominious ending of a famous man . . .

Middle to Late Nineteenth-Century Biographies

Between 1840 and the turn of the century, four biographies describing the life, career and influence of Thomas Paine were produced. Two of these efforts were acclaimed, while the other duo remained relatively uncelebrated in popularity. The authors of the major contributions were Gilbert Vale and Moncure Daniel Conway. The less noted treatments were written by William James Linton and Peter Eckler.

Gilbert Vale was London born, bred and educated. He abandoned his academic preparation for a religious career and moved to the United States in 1829. A multi-talented individual, Mr. Vale was engaged in several occupations during his lifetime. He was a teacher, lecturer and expert on the science of navigation. He also tried his hand as a publisher and journalist in both New York City and Brooklyn, New York. He edited the Citizen of the World, later renamed The Beacon, a popular literary and scientific journal of the Freethought persuasion. Like Thomas Paine, Gilbert Vale was an inventive genius. He patented a combined terrestrial globe and a celestial sphere to facilitate more effective teaching in the field of astronomy.

He was a well-known freethinker, and his writings for the most part reflected arguments for his own peculiar tenets of belief. In 1835, he published what was considered a classic treatise for the freethought movement entitled Fanaticism, Its Source and Influence.⁹⁵

Six years later, in 1841, he published his own answer to the accusations of Paine biographers George Chalmers and James Cheetham. The Life of Thomas Paine was written to directly refute the considerable influence of the James Cheetham Life of Paine. Author Vale also wrote his biography on Thomas Paine in order to correct some mistakes in the W. T. Sherwin treatment. He considered the Sherwin work the best life before published, but added that Mr. Sherwin was incorrect in some particular points and, because his account was exclusively adopted for British tastes, it did not altogether meet American needs.⁹⁶

After reading only a few pages, it becomes quite unmistakable that James Cheetham is the main target for author Vale. In the "Preface," seven pages were devoted to testimony given at the Bonneville-Cheetham trial for slander and defamation of character. Madame Marguerite de Bonneville brought James Cheetham before the bar for slander upon her person. She demanded payment for the scandal brought about by Cheetham's insinuation that she and Thomas Paine had an illicit love affair while she and her two sons lived with him in New Rochelle and Bordentown, as brought out in Mr. Cheetham's book. The Life of Thomas Paine. The case was settled in favor of Madame de Bonneville, thus adding credibility to the opinion that perhaps author Cheetham had misled his readers on other occasions when discussing the character of Mr. Paine.

In order to substantiate his premise that Thomas Paine was not an ogre or devil incarnate, Gilbert Vale added personal anecdotes that illustrated Paine's tenderness even in his old age. For instance, author

Vale related the recollection of Elisha Ward when a young boy living in New Rochelle, New York. Tom Paine had the reputation placed upon him by the townspeople of being a bad and brutal man, so that the children should stay away from him and his farm. For a prank, a group of young boys decided to steal apples from Paine's orchard. Surprisingly, Mr. Paine came outside and happily assisted the boys, showing them where the best fruit was to be found. This overt expression of kindness made an indelible impression on young Elisha Ward which led him to study the works of Thomas Paine. At first his mother objected and took the books away from the young lad, but later gave them back. Perhaps she, too, had changed her mind about Tom Paine's character and writings.⁹⁷

Mr. Vale, as one might surmise, challenged those obvious character flaws of Paine as emphasized in the James Cheetham biography. He attempted, as did most of Paine's devotees, to dissuade the reader from believing that Thomas Paine was an habitual drunkard.

We know over twenty persons who were more or less acquainted with Mr. Paine, and not one of them ever saw him in liquor. His habit appears to have been to take one glass of rum and water with sugar in it, after dinner, and another after supper. His limit at one period, when at Rochelle, was one quart of rum per week, for himself and friends, for Mr. Paine was rather penurious in his old age. This, and this alone, is the only moral fault we find in his character, and we wish to be his impartial historian.⁹⁸

Predictably, Gilbert Vale continued to edify the character of Thomas Paine whenever possible in the reader's eyes, but usually with the applied overtones of objectivity.

Mr. Vale continued along the same vein in discussing the possible flaws in the character of Thomas Paine.

Of Mr. Paine's private character, we cannot say it was perfect. We should be sorry if we could; for then we could not hope to be believed. Mr. Paine was a part of human nature, and partook of its imperfections. He wrote a foolish angry letter to Carver. He was, no doubt, penurious, to a limited extent, in his old age; and in sickness we can easily conceive of his being sometimes peevish and angry; he would not be man if he were not; but these are all the personal blemishes we can discover, and these are counterbalanced by the most noble and social qualities. He had a heart to feel for the distresses of mankind, and a head to conceive the means of relief.⁹⁹

The Gilbert Vale biography was based generally on the previous treatment by W. T. Sherwin, with the addition of new testimony from individuals who knew Thomas Paine during those last few years in America. He was able to fill in many of the gaps appearing in the Sherwin account of these dismal years in Paine's life. Author Vale reiterated the actual facts concerning Thomas Paine's so-called "recantation" of his religious principles, and presented even more evidence from witnesses who, in turn, testified that Paine had made such denial of what he had written in his Age of Reason. Mr. Vale added an Appendix to his work that included the full complement of correspondence between Thomas Paine and his former disciple, James Cheetham. The Paine letters to George Washington, requesting his interference on his behalf for a release from the Luxembourg Prison, were also included in the Appendix. These particular letters had been unpublished and suppressed up to this moment.

The book evidently was a popular one, at least to those free-thinkers and liberals who lauded Tom Paine as their apostle of freedom. Biographer Audrey Williamson called Gilbert Vale, "Paine's first honest and conscientious American biographer."¹⁰⁰ Moncure Daniel

Conway also cited Mr. Vale on five separate occasions in his own classic biography of Thomas Paine. However, other than these few citations, the Vale biography of Paine is not mentioned by the most recent biographers. Undoubtedly, the greatest single effect of this particular work was to initiate a small crack in the door in preparation for the acceptance of the forthcoming biographical endeavor by the American Moncure Daniel Conway.

A year later, in 1842, Chartist poet and engraver, William James Linton, published his anonymously authored Life of Thomas Paine. The English Chartist movement had embraced Thomas Paine to its bosom as its hero and exemplary model. William James Linton, like so many others, fought for political reform and used Mr. Paine's ideas as rallying points for establishing a working-class democracy in Britain. Feeling deeply indebted to Mr. Paine, wood-engraver Linton wrote a biography of his idol. It was a liberal and sympathetic treatment, but did not receive great acclaim. Generally, it was a restatement of information and opinions expressed in previous sympathetic biographies, with added comments by author Linton as to Mr. Paine's genuine close relationship to the cause of the workingman and his problems.¹⁰¹

As to the effect of this biography upon the author himself, unfortunately his journey into the publishing world met with little success. Both in London and later in America, William Linton tested his hand at editing various weekly tracts and monthly magazines. In 1867, stricken with extreme financial difficulties, Mr. Linton left London to seek his fortune in the United States. Separated from his wife and

having their children with him, Linton finally settled in New Haven, Connecticut, where he set up a printing press. In time, he achieved some fame and success in his true craft, that of wood engraving. He died in New Haven in December, 1897. His wife commented upon receiving the news of his demise, "If he had not bitten the Dead Sea apple of impractical politics, [he] would have risen higher in the world of both art and letters."¹⁰²

Although William Linton's Life of Paine did not present a novel argument or any new information on Paine's life, career or character, it was deemed worthy enough to be republished by the New York editor of The National periodical, Peter Eckler, in 1898.

Editor-publisher Peter Eckler in 1892 published his own account, The Life of Thomas Paine. This 88-page treatise suffered from the same problems as did many of the Paine biographies in that it did not markedly increase the general body of information already amassed about Thomas Paine and was so eulogistic as to be of little genuine value in determining the "real Tom Paine."¹⁰³

Peter Eckler, freethinker and editor of The National, ended his "Publisher's Preface" in his Life of Thomas Paine with a key statement which typified his treatment of Mr. Paine throughout the rest of the text.

The writings of Paine, like those of Shakespeare, "are not for a day, but for all time," and the political principles he so ably taught--the moral truths he so earnestly enforced--will be remembered and commended whilst reason holds her throne and justice survives among mankind.

Paine loved his fellowmen, --his life was dedicated to Humanity, --his writings aroused the world, --his genius immortalized his name, --his faith in Democracy was sublime, --his labors were crowned with success, --his reward was neglect, obloquy, and scorn!¹⁰⁴

The one innovation that author Eckler introduced in his heroic eulogy was the addition of brief quotations about Mr. Paine by some of his friends like Clio Rickman, Oliver Goldsmith, Joel Barlow, Mary Wollstonecraft and others. These personal glimpses and recollections of Paine were interspersed throughout the text. Noticeably, nothing really negative about Thomas Paine was included in these quotations and recollections. In any case, this made for a slightly different approach which, critically analyzed, produced more of a compilation than a genuine biography or critical treatment of Thomas Paine.¹⁰⁵

Perhaps the finest and most definitive biography of Thomas Paine to be produced in the nineteenth century was authored by Moncure Daniel Conway. His Life of Thomas Paine was first published in 1892 in New York. Without question, this two-volume account was the most exhaustive study of Paine to date.¹⁰⁶ It produced a watershed in Paine's biographical treatment for, from this point on, a definite attempt toward scholarship would be sought by those writers and students of his life and career. Also the hegemony of English authorship was shattered, and now American writers would become the major contributors to investigate the man and his memory.

Moncure D. Conway was the first American, maybe the first Paine biographer, to make a serious attempt toward a scholarly treatment. Furthermore, he was the initiator of the first erudite and comprehensive compilation of Thomas Paine's writings. This monumental effort came off the New York presses in four volumes over the period 1894-1898, and is considered by many "the first critical and complete gathering of Paine's works."¹⁰⁷

It would seem appropriate at this time to investigate the author of these impressive texts, for this man, Moncure Conway, was as complicated and perplexing an individual as was his declared hero and mentor.

Author Conway was a Virginian, born on March 17, 1832. He came from a rather prominent family. His great-grandfather, Thomas Stone, was one of the signers of the American Declaration of Independence. His grandfather, John Moncure Daniel, had been the American surgeon-general during the War of 1812. Like Thomas Paine, Moncure Conway was a "Renaissance Man," an individual blessed with a variety of abilities and talents, augmented with a potent amount of personal ambition and stamina. He was an author, a newspaperman and he even studied to become a lawyer. However, he gave up the pursuit of a license to practice law in order to enter the ministry. The Reverend Conway, now an ordained Methodist clergyman, was appointed to a circuit in Montgomery County, Maryland. It was in his capacity as a circuit preacher that he first came into contact with the cultivated Hicksite Quakers, "and his faith in both Methodism and slavery was somewhat impaired."¹⁰⁸ This young nineteen year old minister tried to the best of his ability to synthesize faith and reason, the basic tenets of Methodism and his beloved Essays by Ralph Waldo Emerson. "He worked hard at his sermons, sprinkling them freely with the words of the Bible and of Emerson."¹⁰⁹ He, however, discovered that he was not a powerful exhorter in the pulpit who could move entire congregations to repentance and commitment. Instead, he felt the strength of his ministry was in individual contact, not potent preaching.

One day as the Reverend Conway rode past the Hicksite Quaker meetinghouse in Sandy Spring, Maryland, he dismounted and joined their services. Being drawn to the mystical significance of their doctrine of the "inner light," he returned on numerous occasions. It was the outward forms of Quaker living that truly impressed him. Their obvious peace of mind and well-being seemed to him to be the fruit of their creedless religion. Against what he observed at Sandy Spring, "he set up the results of the dogmas of depravity, of salvation by human sacrifice, or hell-fire; and it became more difficult for him to preach."¹¹⁰ As Moncure Conway began to question his tenets of faith, he slowly surrendered to a new understanding of the inherent immorality of the institution of slavery. With a mind full of doubts, depressed and not knowing where to turn, young Conway moved away from Methodism, Virginia, family and friends. He preached his final sermon as a Methodist on December 4, 1852.¹¹¹

The next year, as he attended Harvard Theological School, Moncure Conway converted to Unitarianism. The reason for this move was probably his belief that Unitarianism offered freedom from the doctrine of mankind's total depravity.¹¹²

The single most important influence upon Moncure was in the person of Ralph Waldo Emerson. This noted American philosopher, writer and Transcendentalist spent many hours with the young divinity student, supplying him books on the eastern religions. What he seemingly could not find in the Christian Scriptures, he discovered in the books of the East. Here the oriental mysticism was overpowering and he was enthralled with its study.

Moncure D. Conway received his Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1854. He was given the post of minister of the Unitarian Church in Washington, D. C., from 1854 to 1857. In this position, his antislavery discourses caused great commotion and finally resulted in a rift within the congregation. On October 5, 1856, the First Unitarian Church of Washington, D. C., dismissed him as their minister. The reason for the discharge was not that he was unfit as a minister, but because he refused to consider the best interests of the congregation and the Unitarian Society.¹¹³

In October, Moncure received an invitation to preach at the Unitarian Church of Cincinnati, Ohio. This was to be only for a six-weeks period, but a permanent position was offered him at the end of the term. The merger proved successful and the Reverend Conway met his future wife, Ellen Dana, married her and settled down to a fairly respectable life-style. Again, this self-styled, dedicated crusader for freedom of thought and expression began fresh attacks on the Christian doctrine of total depravity. As did many before him, Thomas Paine included, Moncure Conway stripped away divine revelation from the Holy Scriptures, asserting that the Bible was merely a record of the history of man's development--his foolish actions, dreams and retarded progress. Furthermore, the Reverend Conway reaffirmed his humanistic stand that man can and must lift himself up, because God does not stoop down to do it for him.¹¹⁴ His sermons, although they portrayed a certain theological façade, the real message was taken from Conway's own humanitarian, literary and scientific interests.

Moncure D. Conway was one of the first liberal-minded ministers to become infatuated with Charles Darwin's Origin of Species. The Darwin book appeared in 1859 and, according to Conway in a sermon during December of that same year, he announced to his congregation that Dr. Darwin had delivered the death blow to Christian dogmatism and "all temples not founded on the rock of natural science."¹¹⁵

Radical reformer-pastor Conway received both acclamation and notoriety through his sermons and articles in his Dial periodical. In 1861, he published a book called The Rejected Stone and a year later one entitled The Golden Hour. Both of these literary efforts gained wide circulation for crusader Conway. The next year, 1862, was quite an eventful one for Moncure, because he lectured at the Smithsonian Institution, delivered a sermon in the American Senate Chambers and gathered his father's own slaves and colonized them in Ohio. In 1863, he was chosen as one of the editors of the Commonwealth Magazine of Boston, which had been founded in the interest of the emancipation movement.¹¹⁶

In the spring of 1863, Moncure Conway was sent to England for a summer lecture tour on behalf of the antislavery and Union cause. While residing in London, he published articles in many English periodicals. In February, 1864, London's Independent South Place Chapel offered the young American minister its pulpit for a six-months' trial period. Soon his wife, Ellen, and his children were able to join him in London. The South Place Chapel pulpit became a permanent lectern for Conway. He remained its pastor until 1884.¹¹⁷ Moncure Conway was

invited to join several learned societies in London. Occasionally he lectured at the Royal Institution.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, his pulpit at South Place had become an arena for open expression of rationalism, non-theological ethics and social reform.

During the twenty-two years of his British residency, Moncure Conway's interest in Thomas Paine was rekindled once again. He had the opportunity to visit Thetford, Lewes and other locales where Paine had lived and worked; there he gathered information, letters, whatever materials he could in a long-range preparation for a biography that he would author at some future date.

In 1885, though knowing that he would be sorely missed, Conway and his family returned to the United States. They settled in Brooklyn, New York, where he could enjoy the "free life he found so pleasant, lecturing, visiting, wandering, searching out material for the historical biographies he planned to write."¹¹⁹

While residing in Brooklyn he started attending occasional Sunday afternoon meetings of the local society of freethinkers. It was during these gatherings that Moncure witnessed again an adulation and enthusiastic praise for Tom Paine. This revived his interest anew in Paine and brought back memories of long years past when he was a student in Harvard Divinity School and encountered for the first time Thomas Paine, the hero. Since he had been brought up in a home and community where Paine had been called a great infidel, a devil incarnate, it was rather curious to hear that name praised, even idolized, and he sought to learn more about this man and his beliefs. Fairly

rapidly, the young divinity student came to the conclusion that Thomas Paine had been greatly maligned by his adopted countrymen. As he reminisced details concerning his earlier introduction to Tom Paine, he recalled that in January, 1860, to commemorate Paine's birthday, the young Reverend Conway had delivered a sermon about this misunderstood, loyal patriot. This sermon was only the beginning of many words defending Thomas Paine and his writings.¹²⁰

As to the biography he later published about the life and career of Thomas Paine, Moncure Conway's objective was to write an impartial treatment. As he stated in the "Preface" of The Life of Thomas Paine:

In the laborious work of searching out the real Paine I have found a general appreciation of its importance, and it will be seen in the following pages the generous assistance has been rendered by English clergymen, by official persons in Europe and America, by persons of all beliefs and no beliefs. In no instance have I been impeded by any prejudice, religious or political. The curators of archives, private collectors, owners of important documents bearing on the subject, have welcomed my effort to bring the truth to light. . . . But the interest that led me to the subject has increased at every step; the story has abounded in thrilling episodes and dramatic surprises; and I have proceeded with a growing conviction that the simple facts, dispassionately told, would prove of importance far wider than Paine's personality, and find welcome with all students of history.¹²¹

Mr. Conway concluded his statement of aims and objectives by speaking of the responsibility he had to teach the truth.

I have brought to my task a love for it, the studies of some years, and results of personal researches made in Europe and America: qualifications which I count less than another which I venture to claim--the sense of responsibility, acquired by a public teacher of long service, for his words, which, be they truths or errors, take on life, and work their good or evil to all generations.¹²²

An important addition to the general commentary of Paine scholarship resulted from Moncure Conway's Life. As he asserted in his preface, he gathered his information and evidence from many sources and a long-forgotten sketch of Paine by William Cobbett was rediscovered by Conway and published for the first time in many decades. This biographical sketch on the life, career and influence of Thomas Paine proved that William Cobbett had totally reversed his previous anti-Paine stand made in the late 1790's.¹²³

Mary Elizabeth Burtis, the biographer of Moncure Conway, perhaps gave one of the clearest and most concise evaluations of Conway's efforts to capture the real Thomas Paine.

Throughout the book the reader sees what Paine did and what he stood for but seldom what he was, for the living man--forceful, human, passionate and bold, weak and strong--is lost in the mass of printed letters and documents. . . . Conway's vindication tends to be extreme, bolstering Paine's reputation at the expense of his opponents. But the extremity was, if not justified, explained by the need of a vindication.¹²⁴

Returning to the text of the biography, Moncure D. Conway emphasized one particular aspect as being the most important factor in appraising the man, Thomas Paine, and his principles. Paine's Quakerism was the key, in Conway's eyes, to his understanding. In other words, he believed that upon that Quaker skeleton, the philosophical flesh of Tom Paine was formed. "Paine is explicable only by the intensity of his Quakerism . . . ,"¹²⁵ and "His whole political system is explicable only by his theocratic Quakerism," stated Moncure Conway.¹²⁶

Biographer Conway commented further as to the conspicuous Quaker humanitarian posture in Paine's political theory.

From this time on he seems to have developed a theory of human rights based on theocracy; and so genuinely that in America, while the Bible was still to him the word of God, he solemnly proposed, in the beginning of the Revolution, that a crown should be publicly laid on that book, to signify to the world that "in America the Law is King."¹²⁷

Evidently Thomas Paine's Quakerism had other repercussions upon his life and career for, according to author Conway, "The influence of Paine's Quaker training has been traced in his constructive politics, but its repressive side had more perhaps to do with his career."¹²⁸ Mr. Conway proceeded to explain that "it is your half-repressed poets that kindle revolutions."¹²⁹ Indeed, he continued, "History might be different had Paine not been taught fear of music and poetry."¹³⁰

Conway continually employed his theory of Paine's Quakerism as an impetus of major consequence upon his life and career. Even Mr. Paine's attempt to "humanize" gunpowder was merely indicative of his innate Quaker posture. "Having failed to convert revolutions to Quakerism, Paine tries to soften the heart of gunpowder itself, and insists that its explosiveness may be restrained and detailed like strokes on a boy's top to obtain continual motion."¹³¹

Moncure D. Conway's biography of Thomas Paine became the source for many statements which were later to be discovered inaccurate or, at least, highly suspicious and debatable. For instance, Samuel Ollive, the tobacconist and father of Thomas Paine's second wife, Elizabeth, was mistakenly called a Quaker by Moncure Conway.¹³² For

years biographers had unquestionably accepted the Ollive family as being of the Quaker persuasion. In fact, one of the finest recent treatments authored by Professor David F. Hawke still concurs with Conway's declaration of the Ollive's Quakerism. He stated, "Paine lodged in Lewes with the family of Samuel Ollive, a Quaker who ran a tobacco shop."¹³³ On the other hand, British biographer, Audrey Williamson, destroys this myth with the following statement:

A point about the Ollives and the marriage that needs clearing up is the statement by all biographers, beginning with Conway, that Samuel Ollive and his family were Quakers. The Story of the Old Meeting House, published in 1916 by the Reverend J. M. Connell, the then minister of the Westgate Chapel and later author of a slim book on Paine, emphasizes that this meeting house, in which the Ollives worshipped and where Elizabeth's grandfather had been minister, had never at any time in its history been used by the Quakers.¹³⁴

Ms. Williamson continued in her attempt to establish the truth by presenting some of her own carefully researched facts.

The Quakers formed a meeting house in another part of the town, and Clio Rickman was one of their members. Whether this fact, in addition to the known Quakerism of Paine's father, misled Conway into his error one cannot now tell; but it also trapped him into building on it a totally invalid assumption about the possible reason for the failure of the marriage, based on some Quaker folklore about the bride's period of 'mourning'--or delayed consummation--which need no longer concern us. It was never a convincing psychological theory and Conway admitted it was guesswork.¹³⁵

It is in Conway's treatment that Gouverneur Morris becomes Thomas Paine's relentless archenemy. As American Minister to France, Mr. Morris found himself "eclipsed in Paris by the famous author."¹³⁶ Later author Conway intimated indirectly that pride may have been a factor in Morris' vehement dislike of Thomas Paine.¹³⁷

Applying the same tactics as did other Paine devotees, Mr. Conway endeavored to uphold his hero, often at the expense of other reputations. C. D. Hazen went so far as to suggest that Moncure Conway's "general biographical method seems to be the simple one of creating your hero by generating a suspicion that everyone else is a rogue."¹³⁸

Notwithstanding, Moncure Conway's anger at Paine's antagonists never quite reached the degree of intensity of that shown in the Richard Carlile or Gilbert Vale treatments. Although enemies like Gouverneur Morris, John Adams and others are discussed by author Conway, the attacks upon them are generally more matter of fact than deliberate character assassinations.

However, Minister Morris does receive a great deal of attention by author Conway as his being a major source of intrigue against the character and influence of Thomas Paine. Mr. Conway placed the blame for the long incarceration of Paine squarely on the head of Gouverneur Morris. In his listing of six probable reasons for President Washington's silence to the Paine plea for rescue, Conway constantly referred to the conspiracy of Mr. Morris, which nearly cost Paine his life.¹³⁹ President Washington is not cleared of any blame, but Minister Morris is always portrayed as the real villain in the situation.

Where Paine's antagonistic biographers had noted flaws in his character, Moncure Conway glossed over them with statements like the following:

Paine's defamers have manifested an eagerness to ascribe his maltreatment to personal faults. This is not the case. For some years after his arrival in this country no one ventured to hint anything disparaging to his personal habits or sobriety.¹⁴⁰

Continuing in his effort to portray the true Thomas Paine, Mr. Conway in his chapter entitled "Personal Traits" edified those admirable characteristics in Paine such as that he used snuff (but no other forms of tobacco), detested profanity and indecent anecdotes.¹⁴¹ Regarding the perpetual drunkenness charges, Mr. Conway attested to having amassed many contradictory testimonies. That Thomas Paine did drink alcoholic spirits was true, and also "he unfortunately selected brandy, which causes alcoholic indigestion, and may have partly produced the oft-quoted witness against him--his somewhat red nose."¹⁴² The author admitted that for a few weeks in 1793, Paine saw many of his friends go to the guillotine and feared for his own turn to ride in the tumbrel escorted to the infamous place of execution. Here, only under these dreadful circumstances, did Thomas Paine drink to excess. "After that Paine abstained altogether from spirits, and drank wine in moderation."¹⁴³

Another myth that Moncure Conway sought to destroy was concerning Paine's deathbed recantation of his religious principles. Mr. Conway was as adamant about this particular charge as were his predecessors William Cobbett and Gilbert Vale. Considering this a proper conclusion to his biography, Conway presented his testimony to the effect that Thomas Paine never recanted his deism. As far as divine retribution for his attacks against Christianity, Conway wrote:

The day of Paine's death was a day of judgment. He had not been struck blind or dumb; Satan had not carried him off; he had lived beyond his three-score years and ten and died peacefully in his bed. The self-appointed messengers of Zeus had managed to vex this Prometheus who brought fire to men, but could not persuade him to whine for mercy, nor did the predicted thunderbolts come. This immunity of Thomas Paine brought the deity of dogma into a dilemma. It could be explained only on the theory of an apology made and accepted by the said deity. Plainly there had to be a recantation somewhere. Either Paine had to recant or Dogma had to recant.¹⁴⁴

As to the general acceptance or rejection of the Moncure Conway treatment, his biographer, Mary Elizabeth Burtis, criticized and evaluated The Life of Thomas Paine. She cautiously noted that Conway's sympathies interfered with the aim of considered objectivity because, like Paine, "he was passionate in the service of what was to him truth, contemptuous of expediency, and imprudent in the condemnation of existing forms."¹⁴⁵ She continued by remarking that aside from these weaknesses, the Life was a substantial, creditable effort, recognized by both scholars and critics.¹⁴⁶ A few of the influential scholars of the day accepted the documentary evidence of Mr. Conway's effort, but rejected the character analysis. Sir Leslie Stephen was one of those hesitant to accept Conway's enthusiastic estimation. However, after due deliberation and in the course of time, Leslie Stephen changed his mind about Thomas Paine and produced what is considered by some a very fine, non-partisan and influential biographical essay on Thomas Paine's life and career.¹⁴⁷

Miss Burtis also specified that Moncure Conway's Life was merely a prologue to his effort in editing Paine's complete works. This edition was published in a four-volume series beginning in 1894

and was completed in 1897. This particular edition, often used in conjunction with the revised French edition, published in 1900, produced the first serious achievement in a complete compilation of Mr. Paine's writings and is still considered a standard reference source.

Very few biographies, critical articles, essays or modern compilations exist that do not mention the Conway treatment. Generally, even if the critics do not support Mr. Conway's partisan view, they have used either the biography or complete works as reference sources somewhere in their text or bibliography. The six most recent biographical and compilatory endeavors reveal these various appraisals of the Conway treatment.

In 1945 Dr. Philip S. Foner published his own collection of the works of Thomas Paine. In the "Introduction" to his two-volume effort, The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine, Dr. Foner stated, in a footnote, Moncure D. Conway, Paine's tireless biographer, asserted that the most important source for his religious and many of his political ideas was Quakerism. "It is generally conceded today by Paine scholars that Conway greatly exaggerated this influence."¹⁴⁹ Only this one footnote mentions Moncure Conway's treatment specifically. However, years later when Dr. Foner was privileged to author the Paine biographical essay in the 1974 edition of The Encyclopaedia Britannica Macropaedia, he specified, "The first comprehensive edition of Paine's works is that of Moncure D. Conway, The Writings of Thomas Paine, 4 vol. (1894-96). This has been replaced by Philip S. Foner,

The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine, 2 vol. (1945)."¹⁵⁰

Professor Alfred Owen Aldridge in his biography, Man of Reason, designated Mr. Conway to be "the only previous biographer of Paine to investigate the original documentary sources of Paine's career in France." He continued, "There have been a number of biographies since Conway's, but not a single one adds anything of importance concerning Paine's French period, and very few contain new factual material of any kind."¹⁵¹

Dr. Aldridge found fault with Conway's overt partiality illustrated in his labeling Gouverneur Morris as a contemptible villain who purposely plotted to keep Paine incarcerated in the Luxembourg Prison and portraying Maximilien de Robespierre a misled but benevolent administrator, who was duped into believing the vicious Minister Morris. However, laying aside the obvious personal prejudices shown in the Conway account, Dr. Aldridge concluded that this biography was still "an admirable example of research and devotion to principle."¹⁵³

Ms. Audrey Williamson in her biography cited quotations from Moncure Conway's Life of Paine or referred to his observations on twenty-one occasions. In her opinion, Mr. Conway, like most American biographers, emphasized the American segments of Paine's life to the overlooking of his "English social and political backgrounds and their formative effect on his character and outlook."¹⁵⁴ Ms. Williamson added that the significant effects of Paine's contacts during the French Revolution on his character and career had been neglected also.¹⁵⁵ In any case, author Williamson judged Conway's treatment:

"Although his work went too far in sentimentalizing Paine, it is still the most valuable and full documented sourcebook for writers on the subject."¹⁵⁶

Noel Gerson (Samuel Edwards) in Rebel! gave numerous references to the Conway biography. He clearly acknowledged Moncure Conway as "Paine's principal apologist."¹⁵⁷ However, he decidedly disagreed with many of Mr. Conway's propositions. For example, Moncure Conway's assertion that Gouverneur Morris was largely responsible for Paine's imprisonment was denied by author Gerson. He stated that there was no real truth in this claim and "By the standards of reasonable men Paine's charges were outrageous."¹⁵⁸ In Mr. Gerson's opinion, Thomas Paine was a very sick man and "his conduct can be explained only on the grounds that his stay in prison, coupled with his illness, had exacerbated his tendency to see enemies everywhere."¹⁵⁹

In several other instances, Mr. Gerson acknowledged errors in Conway's over-enthusiasm to promote the memory of Thomas Paine. Nevertheless, Gerson, casting aside obvious partisan statements on the part of Mr. Conway, still regards him to be "the most perceptive of Paine's nineteenth-century biographers."¹⁶⁰

Professor David Freeman Hawke in his own treatment, Paine, mentioned Moncure Conway on only one occasion. In his "Acknowledgments," Dr. Hawke made the following terse statement: "Moncure Conway gave a good part of his own life to researching the two-volume study he published in 1892."¹⁶¹ Furthermore, Dr. Hawke made it very clear that all the material he used from Paine's collected works were taken from the two-volume compilation by Philip S. Foner.¹⁶²

The most recent Paine biography published was written by Dr. Eric Foner. This work, entitled Tom Paine and Revolutionary America, used, as in the case of David F. Hawke, as its main source the Foner Complete Writings. Dr. Foner in his annotated "Notes" section acknowledged that Dr. Hawke's biography is now the best one-volume treatment, but it does not entirely supplant Moncure Conway's Life of Thomas Paine.¹⁶³ In another context, Dr. Foner interjected his opinion that Moncure D. Conway authored what is, nonetheless, considered today, in many ways, the finest biography of Thomas Paine.¹⁶⁴

From these statements made by twentieth-century biographers there seems to be no doubt that Moncure Conway's classic study influenced the general tenor for future treatments on the life, career and influence of Thomas Paine.

Whether the modern scholars completely agreed with the Conway evaluation or not, the treatment in itself became a base, a foundation for more objective, critical analyses of Thomas Paine and the consequences of his life and work on modern history.

Twentieth-Century Biographical Studies and Compilations

In 1914, the Thomas Paine Historical Association of New York published a thirty-one page biographical study written by Elbert Hubbard. This treatment was so partisan in its excessive praise as to be of little value to serious students of Thomas Paine. Mr. Hubbard attributed Tom Paine with the title "the very first American writing man."¹⁶⁵ His admiration continued as he explained, "Paine is the first American who had literary style, and we have not had so many since but that you may count on the fingers of one hand."¹⁶⁶

Elbert Hubbard's enthusiasm did not stop with praise for Paine's literary prowess, but also persisted in his allegation that Common Sense "was directly responsible for the Declaration of Independence six months later and the successful revolution that followed."¹⁶⁷ The highest tribute given Tom Paine by author Hubbard was that, if America had seriously considered his wise counsel on the evils of slavery, the Civil War would have been avoided. More importantly, "had the world heeded Paine's advice, the great European War of Nineteen-Hundred-Fourteen and all other wars since Paine's time had never taken place."¹⁶⁸

Other statements by Mr. Hubbard are equally illustrative of his super-partisan stand. In his concluding paragraph he said:

The pen of Paine made the sword of Washington possible. And as Paine's book, Common Sense, broke the power of Great Britain in America, and The Rights of Man gave free speech to England, so did The Age of Reason give pause to the juggernaut of orthodoxy. Paine blazed the way and made it possible for men to preach the sweet reasonableness of reason. He was the pioneer in a jungle of superstition.¹⁶⁹

Although this particular treatment offered no worthwhile contribution to the realm of Paine scholarship, it was representative of the pro-Paine thinking that was now overtly expressed in the early decades of the twentieth century.

In 1925, two biographical treatments were published. The first one, Thomas Paine (1737-1809), was authored by an Englishman, F. J. Gould, who attempted to present Thomas Paine within the eighteenth-century historical perspective. The biography does not afford "detailed handling, but the study is balanced and reasonably

objective."¹⁷⁰ The descriptive background material, especially concerning eighteenth-century England in the throes of the Industrial Revolution, is worthwhile reading. At the time of this revolution with its dire effects upon England and her colonies, F. J. Gould saw fit to portray Thomas Paine as a saviour. He wrote:

A man of the people was needed to speak in the plainest English, and to summon all the forces of democratic common-sense to the evangel of an efficient social politics, a humaner economics, a more rational doctrine of over-sea colonization and a saner and more generous religion.

The man appeared in Thomas Paine.¹⁷¹

The most interesting point to be made by Mr. Gould was his declaration that biographer Moncure D. Conway's efforts raised Paine's finest memorial, and it was through him that a new interest was resurrected in the life and influence of Thomas Paine.¹⁷²

The American editor, William M. Van der Weyde, edited a ten-volume series on Paine in 1925. The Life and Works of Thomas Paine was published as a "Patriot's Edition" by the Thomas Paine National Historical Association of New Rochelle, New York. The series was divided into ten volumes with the following headings:

1. Volume I: "Life of Thomas Paine."
2. Volume II: "Common Sense and the Crisis."
3. Volume III: "The Crisis, Patriotic Papers."
4. Volume IV: "Political Pamphlets."
5. Volume V: "Letters and Dissertations."
6. Volume VI: "Rights of Man."
7. Volume VII: "Rights of Man, Essays."
8. Volume VIII: "The Age of Reason."
9. Volume IX: "Theological Discussions."
10. Volume X: "Miscellany, Poetry, Index."

Harry Hayden Clark, in his "Selected Bibliography" section of Thomas Paine: Representative Selections, called the Van der Weyde

treatment as "extreme adulation."¹⁷¹ Although not a single one of the recent Paine biographers even mention this particular ten-volume edition, the aims and objectives of this series becomes unmistakably clear in the "Introduction" written by Thomas A. Edison, American inventor and freethinker. Here, Edison proclaims his interest in Paine as an inventor. He commended author-editor Van der Weyde for his adding a separate chapter in the biography which details the creative, inventive mind of Thomas Paine as seen through his personal inventions. Edison is quick to state that: "Important as were some of Paine's mechanical inventions, they seem to me of minor interest, however, when we consider 'Common Sense,' and Paine's planning of this great American republic, of which he may very justly be termed the real founder."¹⁷⁴ This laudatory preface by Thomas Edison concludes with the usual proclamation:

If Thomas Paine did not receive a just measure of appreciation in his lifetime, the world has at last commenced to properly appraise his worth and importance, as is exemplified by this new biography, and the new edition of Paine's writings.

Thomas Paine should be read by his countrymen.¹⁷⁵

The William Van der Weyde study cannot be considered a scholarly or critical effort, because the necessary academic amenities are not present. There are no references listed, and no bibliography contributes to the knowledge of the source materials used in the edition. Footnotes are also noticeably absent except for an occasional notation by the author which habitually expresses his personal opinion, while no source is mentioned to back up that position. The lack of

objectivity is quickly recognized. The aim of presenting a case for the complete vindication of Thomas Paine before the American public is apparent. The result is a uncritical "whitewashing" that cannot be considered as a serious addition to Paine memorabilia.

In 1927, Mary Agnes Best produced Thomas Paine, Prophet and Martyr of Democracy. Her biographical study portrayed Tom Paine as a political agitator and pamphleteer whose writings caused great commotion in the American and European political arenas and religious circles.

Miss Best has been praised for the pleasing style in which she wrote. In the words of literary critic, C. L. Snider, in the New York Herald Tribune, "Menckenes will find no fault with the style, and even morons and movie fans can understand it. It is free from dullness, and there is none of the jargon of psychoanalysis about it."¹⁷⁶ A more recent reviewer, however, said that Miss Best's popular biography is "seriously marred by its too-strong use of the vernacular and its pronounced pro-Paine bias."¹⁷⁷ W. E. Woodward, who would later write his own biography on Thomas Paine, labeled Miss Best's treatment vivid and well done. Then he added that "She knows a great deal; and her fault--if it be a fault--is trying to tell it all at once, like a fast talker."¹⁷⁸

This treatment was a popular one, for eighteen reviews followed the publishing of the book. The popularity was undoubtedly due to the vivid, absorbing writing style. No footnotes were used, even though quotations were constantly employed throughout the text.

There can be no question as to the earnest effort made by Miss Best to provide a well-researched study. The evidence of careful investigation is easily discernible, but it falls short of the mark because of the omission of footnotes and references.

No new information is forthcoming in this treatment, however, because of Best's impassioned advocacy. Thomas Paine is skillfully portrayed as a genuine martyr, an outcast misunderstood and misrepresented by those who should have lauded his mighty efforts on the behalf of political, economic and social reform.

Miss Best's concluding statement summed up her belief in the overt and relentless persecution of this great man:

For a man who claimed, "The world is my country; to do good is my religion," Paine had a rough time of it. His surfeit of citizenship involved him in endless trouble. Convicted of treason in the land of his birth, English ships prowled the ocean in search of him. He was mutilated physically and spiritually in the land which had adopted him with acclaim and royal honors. The land of his most profound devotion loudly and abusively repudiated the god-father of the country. In short, Universal Citizen Paine was the pariah of the world.¹⁷⁹

A famous journalist, George Creel, who became quite a propagandist himself and headed a national committee on public information for the American government during World War One, was a great admirer of Thomas Paine and his rhetoric. In 1932, his biography entitled Tom Paine-Liberty Bell was published. This short biography contained only 173 pages and gave the impression of being an expanded magazine article. Here, once again, professionalism and scholarly precision were markedly absent. However, the treatment was enjoyable

and appeared with something of the flavor of Paine's own pamphlets. The partisan treatment was written in a journalistic style containing no documentation, no bibliography and no new information on the subject. Basically, the Creel effort was another attempt, written in a highly pleasing manner, to portray Thomas Paine as an innocent victim of perpetrated malice and design.¹⁸⁰

Another undocumented biographical treatment appeared for public approval in 1937. Tom Paine: Friend of Mankind was written by Hesketh Pearson. The author attempted to describe Thomas Paine as a man rather than as a great hero. Paine's character and personality traits were emphasized in this study. For example, Hesketh Pearson carefully noted a particular trait which had been condemned so often by Paine's antagonists.

He constantly referred, with justifiable pride, to the wonderful work he had done, knew most of his pamphlets by heart, and frequently quoted from them. . . . This incapacitated him from appreciating points of view opposed to his own and gave a tincture of pharisaism to his moral and political attitude. If people disagreed with him they were wrong.¹⁸¹

Mr. Pearson continued to be fair in evaluating another Paine tendency: "He was creative of extremes, subject to very low and very high spirits, and it often happened that he was taciturn in the presence of more than two or three persons."¹⁸²

Crane Brinton reviewed the book and pronounced it to be well written. He stated, "It puts Paine on a pedestal, but it makes no attempt to find the other-worldly foundations of the pedestal."¹⁸³ A recent reviewer, Jerome D. Wilson, criticized the Pearson treatment

for "Free handling of sources and tendency to hero-worship render many parts suspect."¹⁸⁴

Harry Hayden Clark includes several separate criticisms in his annotated bibliography. For instance, he quotes from the review by Frank Smith, whose own Paine biography was published the following year, as saying the book was a "swift and spirited story." However, in its effort to emphasize Paine's personality, the result was a treatment "almost in a vacuum, apart from the social and intellectual environment."¹⁸⁵ Dr. Clark added that Frank Smith observed that the treatment "obscures old questions and leads to no fresh horizons," and abounds in "downright errors and questionable assertions . . ." having swallowed "the Chalmers-Cheetham stories about marital difficulties, drunkenness, and filth."¹⁸⁶

The general consensus of the reviewers of the Pearson effort is that it was not much more than a good piece of journalism, basically a copy of Conway, pleasantly readable, entertaining, but offering no new information or insight in the study of the life, career and influence of Thomas Paine.

Another highly laudatory, partisan biography was published in 1938. S. M. Berthold's Thomas Paine: America's First Liberal offered an enormous amount of unqualified praise as exemplified by such declarations as "Paine was undoubtedly the most valuable emigrant who ever landed on America's shores--worth more than a dozen Mayflowers."¹⁸⁷ Mr. Berthold even went so far as to declare that Thomas Paine was the genuine inventor of the steamboat. His reasoning, without documentation for such a claim, was stated as follows:

Long before Fulton ever dreamed of cylinders and pistons, or Fitch had launched his steamboat (which he did in 1787), Paine had propounded the underlying principle of steam navigation, which was to develop the engine along the lines of the turbine.¹⁸⁸

Harry H. Clark published in his Representative Selections quotations from the Frank Smith review as it appeared in American Literature in January, 1939. The review severely panned the Berthold treatment.

Mr. Berthold goes on a slap-dash excursion over the main facts of Paine's life. He gives little new on Paine, many historical inaccuracies, and some unintegrated odds and ends of the eighteenth-century scene. This rambling chaos of materials is presented in one of the most poorly written books that ever came off the press. The biography is hopelessly marred by a thousand and one of the most elementary sub-freshman errors in punctuation, spelling, wording, proofreading, and sentence structure. Mr. Berthold's only merit lies in his enthusiasm and good intentions.¹⁸⁹

Jerome D. Wilson is not so blatantly antagonistic toward the Berthold study. He concludes that the book lends itself to promote unqualified praise for Paine in the short thirty-six chapter account. The treatment is undocumented and poorly edited. Mistakes in spelling, punctuation and basic sentence structure are found throughout the text.¹⁹⁰ Since no new information on Paine is forthcoming, the Berthold study leaves a great deal to be desired in that the author tries to say too much, covers too extensive a territory and is too partisan to be effective.

The biography, Thomas Paine: Liberator, by Frank Smith, is perhaps one of the most controversial treatments to be published in the modern era. This 1938 version of the life of Thomas Paine was another popular and highly partisan portrayal.¹⁹¹ Without question, author

Smith's endeavor was one of the best popular biographies, because it was readable, thought provoking and did offer some fresh material and insight for Paine research.¹⁹² Nevertheless, its effectiveness is seriously hampered by the lack of documentation. Undoubtedly, the lack of furnishing source and reference materials played a role in this treatment's being seldom entered in the bibliographies of the most recent biographical studies on Thomas Paine.

Dr. David F. Hawke is the only recent biographer who directly cites and recommends the Smith study. He evidently is correct in stating that his "admiration for this work is shared by few others. Clark, Representative Selections (1944 ed.), p. cxxxi, finds it only 'interesting in its enthusiasm.'"¹⁹³ In his "Acknowledgments," Dr. Hawke admitted that the Frank Smith treatment never received the credit it deserved. He explained that Smith failed to provide annotation, bibliography and an index, but that "only those with an intimate knowledge of Paine's life were aware of the considerable amount of material he had unearthed."¹⁹⁴

Professor Robert E. Spiller of Swarthmore College reviewed the Frank Smith treatment for American Literature soon after the book was published. He declared at the outset of his review that it was a most difficult but necessary task for history to endeavor to gain objectivity and perspective on the biographies of extremely controversial individuals. He added that "the case of Thomas Paine is probably hopeless."¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, Dr. Spiller stated that it was almost impossible for any biographer to write about Paine without becoming highly partisan

in approach. The Smith work, in his estimation, is a sound and readable account, a vindication of Thomas Paine, the man, and his principles.

"As such, it adds materially to an appreciation of Paine and gives a certain timeless quality to his cause, without becoming a definitive biography. Rather it should be classed as historical criticism."¹⁹⁶

Critic Spiller continued to acknowledge the study as one containing the qualities of sound scholarship but lacking objectivity. The greatest strength of the book, in his estimation, was its sympathetic appreciation of Thomas Paine. However, in turn, the weakness was easily discernable in Smith's one-sided condemnation of those villains, the antagonists of Mr. Paine. Professor Spiller concluded his review with this comment: "Mr. Smith's biography, for its singleness of view, presents the reader with the world as Paine saw it, not necessarily as it was. The final impression is one of the dignity rather than of the folly of this tragic figure."¹⁹⁷

Crane Brinton also reviewed the Smith biography shortly after its publication. His criticism mainly evolved around the issue of no documentation and excessive partisanship. He admired Mr. Smith's research, but admitted that effectiveness was lost by lack of source information. In any case, Dr. Brinton suggested, "Mr. Smith's is the best of the recent short lives of Paine."¹⁹⁸

Professor R. R. Palmer's greatest criticism of the Smith work was that Mr. Smith almost completely identified himself with Paine. The author became too entangled in the personality of his subject, thus objectivity was lost. As to his partisan enthusiasm, "Mr. Smith weakens his argument by his partiality, for he makes the reader wonder

what may be said on the other side."¹⁹⁹ Professor Palmer concluded his review with this final thought:

We are given to believe that if Paine failed to become a great historical figure it was because the force of piety and reaction were leagued against him. Other revolutionaries have triumphed over this handicap, why not Paine? The puzzle is not solved.²⁰⁰

Professor Joseph Dorfman of Columbia University reviewed the book for the American Historical Review. It was his contention that Mr. Smith's book was not a definitive study and was especially deficient in the proper analysis of Thomas Paine's economic philosophy. He also declared that the omission of documentation was most regrettable. However, with the shortcomings set aside, Dr. Dorfman specified that the Smith book should stimulate further investigation into the life of Thomas Paine, the revolutionary era and into a more intelligible understanding of the changing concept of Democracy since the eighteenth century.²⁰¹

Howard Fast, novelist and author of historical fiction, published his own narrative of the life and career of Tom Paine in 1943. Citizen Tom Paine was a popular, fast-paced historical novel that portrayed its hero as a highly complex personality, "a revolting yet compelling and appealing character."²⁰² Tom Paine's self-pity, anger, resentment, drinking problems are all captured in this eminently readable novel. Perhaps the review by Allen Nevins best described the lasting power and genuine effectiveness of this work. "The novel has power. But, until Mr. Fast learns to combine power with more restraint, more careful accuracy, and more studied art, his books will

not last."²⁰³ The critics generally agreed that the novel was well written and highly readable but was not a lasting or definitive study of Thomas Paine.

In many ways the most useful handbook for the serious student of Thomas Paine was published in 1944 by Professor-editor Harry Hayden Clark. Thomas Paine: Representative Selections, with its carefully documented 107-page introduction, is a valuable addition to Paine scholarship, for Professor Clark has, with accuracy and precision, introduced a clear overview of Mr. Paine's literary, political, economic, social and educational theories as "found in his own peculiar blending of science and deism."²⁰⁴ It was Dr. Clark's thesis that Newtonianism played the major role in creating the basic philosophy of Thomas Paine. Dr. Clark set about to prove that Moncure Conway was mistaken in presuming that Paine's Quakerism was the predominant factor underlying the patterns of his philosophical thought.

In addition to the excellent "Introduction," Dr. Clark also provided his study of Paine's major pamphlets with such useful items as the annotated bibliography, a chronological table of important facts about Paine's life and career and concise notes on those major works of Paine that he included in Representative Selections. These notes on specific works provided historical criticisms, background information and, most important, a succinct analysis of those major points expressed therein.²⁰⁵

The 1961 revised edition added the most recent works on Paine to an already quite comprehensive bibliography. The critics applauded

this effort as a valuable addition to Paine scholarship. Philip Davidson, author of the highly acclaimed study, Propaganda and the American Revolution, judged "Professor Clark's introduction to this selection of Paine's writings as the best analysis in print of Paine's ideas and their sources."²⁰⁶

The year following the Clark study, a comprehensive compilation of the works of Paine appeared in the bookstores. Dr. Philip S. Foner collected and edited a two-volume work entitled The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine. The edition also included a thirty-eight page biographical essay as an introduction, a chronological table of the writings of Paine and notes and introductions presenting historical background information on the works of Thomas Paine.

Within his biographical sketch, Philip Foner quickly initiated his disagreement with both Moncure D. Conway and Harry H. Clark. He simply declared that concerning those major influences on Paine's life and thought, "Both his Quaker background and his study of Newtonian science influenced his thinking along progressive lines, though neither probably had the effect that some writers have stressed."²⁰⁷ Dr. Foner then proceeded to discuss in more detail Thomas Paine's Quakerism as emphasized by Mr. Conway and Dr. Clark upon the Newtonianism influence. He concluded that both scholars greatly overemphasized the weight of these factors upon Thomas Paine's political philosophy. Dr. Foner then stated, "Certainly Professor Clark succeeds only in turning Paine upside down when he argues that his political ideas grew out of his religious ideas."²⁰⁸ The crux of the matter, Foner believed, was Paine's life and his experiences in general. He specified, "But life itself was an

extremely important teacher."²⁰⁹ He continued along this vein, reasoning that throughout the first thirty-seven years of Paine's life, "he saw enough misery in England, enough of the contrast between the affluence of the upper classes and the poverty and suffering of the masses to influence his thinking for the remainder of his days."²¹⁰ Simply stated, it was Dr. Foner's contention that Thomas Paine's background in England, his personal experiences and observation of the terrible condition of the poor and oppressed and his desire to remedy and reform those conditions were the real contributors to his political, religious and economic philosophy. Dr. Foner, like biographer Frank Smith, praised Thomas Paine for his humanitarianism and socialist tendencies so well defined within a democratic framework.

Professor Foner was requested, in a letter, to respond to two questions. If he were given the opportunity to rewrite his biographical sketch, published in 1945, on Thomas Paine, would he alter his position at this time? If so, what changes would he now make in reexamining the life, career and influence of Thomas Paine upon history? Dr. Foner obligingly replied to the inquiry with his declaration that he would place more emphasis on Paine's limitations, as a radical, on the eve of the American Revolution as directly contrasted with the position taken by the more radical forces within the revolutionary camp. Dr. Foner suggested that he would also stress some of Paine's limitations in the French Revolution. Other than accepting certain restrictions on Paine's radicalism and effect upon both the American and French Revolutions, Dr. Foner said that he would not basically alter

his position. He stated furthermore, "In the main apart from these two points, I would if anything have indicated a greater respect for Paine's place in the Democratic tradition than I did when I wrote on him in the two volumes I published in the 1940's."²¹¹

Dr. Foner's two-volume compilation received good reviews from the critics. A typical review by Dr. Allen Nevins described Foner's effort as, "In short, the two volumes are at once the fullest, the most inexpensive, and the most usable edition of Paine that has yet been published."²¹² Dr. Jerome D. Wilson, in his annotated bibliography of Mr. Paine, agreed with the Nevins assessment, and added that the account was "restrained, well researched, and documented."²¹³ Wilson, in evaluating the Foner biographical sketch, concluded that the essay interestingly "presents Paine, not as the conventional 'restless rebel,' but as a world citizen and democrat whose unique pen was moved by the events around him."²¹⁴ Taking all factors into account, it was Dr. Wilson's conclusion that the Foner treatment was "the fullest and most usable edition of Paine yet published."²¹⁵

Biographer David F. Hawke, however, disagreed with the Nevins and Wilson appraisals and declared, "Even today no full, let alone adequate, collection of Paine's public and private papers exists."²¹⁶ He calls the Foner treatment the latest and best attempt, but insists that it is seriously flawed.²¹⁷ The treatment is defective in his estimation, because some letters are misdated and, occasionally, without notice, they are given in a condensed form or split apart to be presented as separate letters in different sections of the text.²¹⁸ Dr. Hawke

further contended that the topical organization used by Dr. Foner hinders the student who prefers the chronological approach. He continued in his evaluation to state that the index was inadequate, "to put it courteously."²¹⁹ Finally, Professor Hawke concluded that in his opinion "no serious effort has been made to ferret out hitherto uncollected material," and therefore a new compilation of the writings of Thomas Paine is needed.²²⁰

The year 1945 was blessed with another biographical endeavor by author W. E. Woodward. Tom Paine: America's Godfather was purposely written, as were most of the twentieth-century treatments, to deny and contradict the Theodore Roosevelt statement that Thomas Paine was "a filthy, little atheist." Mr. Woodward, through presenting the facts of Paine's life, denies that he was any one of the above.

The Woodward treatment received somewhat mixed reviews. It was the general opinion that the book, though stylishly written, added no new information to the subject, showed signs of rather hasty editing and lacked objectivity. The treatment was, nevertheless, a popular one if for no other reason than for its enthusiastic, readable style, even though the same ground was repeatedly covered, offering the same denials against those same adverse charges made concerning Paine's character and influence. In conclusion, the W. E. Woodward biography offered no novel interpretation and was merely "eulogistic, undocumented, and uncritical."²²¹

Miss Hildegard Hawthorne, in 1949, published a biography entitled His Country Was the World: A Life of Thomas Paine. This was

another enthusiastic effort at hero worship, but written expressly for high-school-age readers who found the treatment was informative and interesting.²²²

Thomas Del Veccio, in publishing his monument to the memory of Tom Paine in 1956, entitled Tom Paine: American, endeavored to restore Paine to his rightful position as a patriot without peer. The bulk of the book was devoted to a study of Paine's years in America during the Revolutionary era. It becomes clearly evident that Mr. Del Veccio's purpose was to reinstate Tom Paine as "a forgotten American hero, waiting to be resurrected and placed in his proper, high niche in his country's history and in the hearts of all Americans."²²³ Mr. Del Veccio's highest memorial to Paine repeats the typical devotee's preamble.

He was the founder of what has come to be known as Americanism and Democracy, and he had given the country he loved its name. For sheer unselfishness, unstinting patriotism and dedication to a cause, no country has a parallel; and, on reflection, it may well be that if any man deserves the title of "Father of His Country," it perhaps belongs to Paine.²²⁴

A year later, Dr. Leo Gurko wrote Tom Paine: Freedom's Apostle. This treatment, like that of Hildegard Hawthorne, was designed for the young teenage reader. This rendition differed from the Hawthorne effort in that it was objectively critical and did not attempt to display overt hero worship for Tom Paine. Dr. Gurko, who was then head of the English Department at Hunter College, had spent a year in Europe on a Ford Foundation Fellowship, researching the material for this biography.²²⁵ It was the consensus of the majority of the reviewers that Dr. Gurko's attempt was an ably written, objective and accurate description of a very complex and controversial historical figure. Furthermore, the book had significant

value in that it presented a vivid picture of the times, major events and philosophical movements in America, England and France during those last decades of the eighteenth century.²²⁶ The excellence of the treatment was further declared in that this well-written work "makes no attempt to gloss over Paine's shortcomings. Emphasizes, in fact, the contradictions in his personality."²²⁷

The most scholarly, adult-level biography to be offered to the public in the 1950's was written by Professor Alfred Owen Aldridge. This 1959 treatment, entitled Man of Reason, was the first twentieth-century study of Thomas Paine to be largely constructed from original research completed in France, England and America.²²⁸ Dr. Aldridge, then a professor of English at the University of Maryland, had published numerous articles about Thomas Paine before he attempted his own biographical study. His objective was a simple one, to submit a clear and consistent analysis of Paine's ideas and actions and to reexamine many of the controversial aspects of his life and career. Dr. Aldridge attempted to portray Paine as one of the "luminaries of both the American and French revolutions."²²⁹ In his "Introduction," author Aldridge expounded upon those experiences and talents that caused this famous cosmopolite to become such an influential figure in eighteenth-century literature and history.

He served in America as a soldier, diplomat and journalist; in France, as a legislator and constitution-maker; then became in both countries, as well as in his native England, a symbol of the rights of man and the struggle for democracy.²³⁰

Professor Aldridge continued along this same avenue with the acknowledgment of Tom Paine's role in another major revolution.

In a third great revolution--that in the realm of theology--he became the most notorious champion of deism the world has ever known and is still a symbol of the rationalistic spirit of his age.²³¹

Being an English teacher, Dr. Aldridge placed great emphasis on Paine's literary effectiveness, as illustrated by his statement, "His contribution to the propaganda of its Revolution equaled that of Franklin to its diplomacy and that of Washington to its military strategy."²³² Being both an idealist and an agitator, according to Dr. Aldridge, Paine fully witnessed the reforms he sought only once, during and immediately following the American Revolution.²³³ This momentary contentment, and the peace of mind that resulted, was short-lived for almost "every cause which he afterwards espoused ended in checkmate or defeat."²³⁴

Another point that biographer Aldridge presented was that although Mr. Paine was clearly a radical in his political and religious thinking, he should not be labeled a communist or an atheist, as so often described by "those who do not understand his writings--both his extreme foes and his extreme partisans."²³⁵

Another thesis disclosed in the Aldridge treatment was the author's insistence that the major reason for Paine's relative obscurity and ostracism in America before his death in 1809 was that his chief enemies "were appalled by his political, not his religious views."²³⁶ Indeed, Aldridge proposed respectively that a main "reason for the obscurity which enveloped Paine's last years was his long absence from the United States."²³⁷ He, frankly, was out of touch with those new issues and areas of conflict that had developed in the

American political environment. The dilemma was explained in the following way:

Concern with the fundamental principles which Paine had previously developed and applied in an arena embracing two continents had degenerated into the relatively petty issues of party politics. Paine dedicated himself earnestly to the cause of Jefferson and the Republicans, but the subjects of conflict were so narrow and local that his writing, much of it over unfamiliar pseudonyms, was scarcely distinguishable from that of scores of minor journalists engaged in routine political controversy. Paine was inevitably engulfed in the mass.²³⁸

Dr. Aldridge's careful observation of the role of the contemporary environment upon the influence of Thomas Paine was informative and added balance and depth to his treatment. The reviewers applauded this scholarly effort as a balanced account, "judicious in his praise and criticism."²³⁹ The addition of hitherto unpublished materials, the careful use of documentation and the objective not to please either camp, enemy or devotee, influenced the reviewers to heartily recommend this study as the most definitive biography of Paine to date. The critics also acclaimed Dr. Aldridge's ability to present the facts so that his treatment was favorable to Paine but, at the same time, exposed his human weaknesses.

Howard Fast, a Paine biographer of an earlier era, called this treatment "the most comprehensive study of Thomas Paine that we have . . . the one weakness in this work is the failure to illuminate the very personality of the man who is the subject of the book."²⁴⁰ Dr. Aldridge's inability to vividly capture Paine, the man, was the only general criticism agreed upon by most of the reviewers.

Dr. Aldridge's Man of Reason was complemented by chapter bibliographical notes and an index. The result was a carefully researched

and scholarly treatment. Dr. David F. Hawke acquiesced with the earlier critical reviews, adding his own brief and concise evaluation.

In 1959 Alfred Owen Aldridge capped a string of scholarly articles with his own biography of Paine. The bibliography revealed that he had traveled far beyond Smith and Conway and along the way had uncovered a large amount of new information, much of it fugitive writings by Paine unknown to all editors of his works.²⁴¹

When asked if he might have changed his attitude toward Paine in the light of new evidence discovered since 1959, Dr. Aldridge wrote, "I am reasonably sure that if I had the opportunity to rewrite my biography at the present time that I would change practically nothing."²⁴² He added that in his estimation the "only evidence of unusual significance which has come to light since that time consists of the identification of the Abbé Moullet as his contact with the archbishop of Toulouse."²⁴³ After answering the requested questions, Dr. Aldridge was then kind enough to send along a copy of his latest article on this particular matter.

The American monopoly on twentieth-century Paine biographies was broken in 1973 with the publishing of Thomas Paine: His Life, Work, and Times. The author, Audrey Williamson, has been a prolific writer, having some twenty books to her credit. Her interests are varied, having authored books on the ballet and contemporary theater as well as three biographies on the lives of George Bernard Shaw, Thomas Paine and John Wilkes.

The Paine study was dedicated to the memory of her father, Herbert Edgar Williamson, prominent British Socialist and trade unionist. Her own socialist persuasion, in her interpretation of Thomas

Paine and his influence upon history, becomes very evident within the first few chapters of the study.

Ms. Williamson explained that her purpose in writing a biography on Paine was "to present a fair psychological picture and sift truth from legend, while giving all the salient material where the evidence is conflicting."²⁴⁴

Those significant points that biographer Williamson stresses deal within the factual as well as psychological sphere. Of particular interest is her clearing up the Ollive "Quaker" question. Ms. Williamson declared Moncure Conway and other Paine biographers negligent in their pursuit of the truth concerning the religious conviction of Thomas Paine's second wife, Elizabeth Ollive, and her family. Students of Paine can thank Audrey Williamson for presenting factual material that overturns the misconception of the Ollive's Quaker connections that began with Moncure Conway.

Ms. Williamson proceeds to explain away many of those quirks of Paine's personality that his antagonists often displayed so vehemently. The issue over excessive pride and vanity so prevalent in these attacks was analyzed by the author as being evidence of a deep-seated inferiority complex that often appeared as superiority and vanity. She explained her theory in the following statement:

It is worth consideration, I think, that Paine's extremes of mood and reticence in company, like his highly sensitive reactions to real or imagined slights, grew from his inner realization or his comparatively humble origins and the ambivalent attitudes he must have sensed, as a consequence, among some of his opponents. . . .²⁴⁵

Biographer Williamson continued to expound upon her observations in more detail.

His so-called vanity in drawing attention to his works, as I have already suggested, could have sprung from the same source. It was his armour against the inferiority complex which, had he given way to it, might have been induced in him by the criticism of his views and overt reflections on his background. His refuge was the printed page, where he was no man's footstool and could most feel the quality of his own powers.²⁴⁶

Wherever the author could interject the image of Thomas Paine as a prototype of a great socialist, she did. In order to give credence to her belief in Paine's basic socialistic nature as displayed in his humanitarianism, she stated he was a changeable personality but always cared for the poor and oppressed.

He was a chameleon whose colours changed with the eye of the individual beholder, not constant psychologically even to himself, except in this one great virtue which was not merely to go down into history, but in a sense transform it: the virtue of care for humanity in the mass and in particular the rights of the poor and dispossessed.²⁴⁷

The Williamson treatment, documented only by bibliography and index, received mixed reviews, most of which could be considered lukewarm in acceptance. The unnamed critic of the Economist gave a rather typical criticism in that he said, "Williamson cannot resist the temptation to remold her idol as the forerunner of all the good causes of the moderate left--pacifism, the welfare state, non-racialism, the United Nations." He continued by further stating, "The author of 'Common Sense' and 'The Age of Reason' wilts under this benevolent treatment and emerges as a typical constituency delegate to a Labour party conference."²⁴⁸

Alfred Stern of Library Journal called the study sympathetic and pedantic, but offering good coverage of Paine's early life in

England and later in France. He especially criticizes the condescending consistency of the author's repeating over and over what is already known about the sociohistorical developments before and after every phase of Paine's activities. His severest remark concerning the Williamson's treatment is that she had "an annoying habit of equating Paine's political philosophy with that of George Bernard Shaw."²⁴⁹

Almost every reviewer remarked about Ms. Williamson's attempt to make Paine a modern, moderate socialist. In their estimation, the book suffers because of this constant objective on the part of the author. In the process, Ms. Williamson attempts "to make profundities of commonplaces without enlarging our understanding or appreciation of his influence."²⁵⁰ All things taken into account, it was the consensus that other biographies, especially that by Alfred O. Aldridge, would better serve to give the student of Thomas Paine a clearer comprehension of his life and influence.

Popular historical novelist and biographer, Noel B. Gerson, publicly known by the pseudonym, Samuel Edwards, tried his own hand at capturing the real Tom Paine. Rebel! came off the presses in the spring of 1974. This study encompassed the life of Paine from his boyhood days in rural England to his death in the United States in 1809.

Possibly, the most interesting innovation, differing from the usual biographical interpretation that emanated from Gerson's pen was the constant reference to Thomas Paine's sexual behavior. Author

Gerson seems to have used this particular vehicle for its immediate shock value, thus providing a rather dramatic undercurrent which might satisfy contemporary literary tastes. As F. M. Brodie of the New Republic suggested, "[Edwards] has Paine drifting into affairs with almost every landlady he boarded with [and] consorting with prostitutes. . . ."251

Noel Gerson, like Audrey Williamson, was intrigued with the intimate Tom Paine, his personality traits and private life. He agreed with many other writers that Paine, after returning to America in 1802, developed into a sickly, rather aggressive old man. In Gerson's treatment the main reason for this somewhat rapid deterioration was not the amount of liquor he was supposed to have ingested, but rather was "his tension-laden stay in prison, where he thought each day was his last. . . ."252 Mr. Gerson then contended that the incarceration in the Luxembourg, coupled with his physical ailment, "warped Paine and transformed him into a combative, aggressively unpleasant old man."253 As the biographer saw it, Paine's bad habits became even more enunciated and recognizable to friend and enemy alike.

Until this time he had been mildly eccentric, but not all of his bad habits became more pronounced. He wore soiled linen, neglected his appearance and bathed infrequently. He drank steadily and heavily, although few ever saw him intoxicated. His inflated ego made it impossible for anyone to hold a meaningful conversation with him, and he quarreled with those who dared to oppose his views, more often than not becoming vituperative.254

This treatment, expressively written for the general public as were his previous credits, 55 Days at Peking and The Naked Maja, was commonly accepted for what it was meant to be--a serviceable biography

appealing to contemporary tastes. James B. Whisker, of West Virginia University, reviewed the book and sharply expressed the scholar's opinion, "The work cannot be taken too seriously for it is written without footnotes or documentation."²⁵⁵ Professor Whisker continued to criticize the treatment by stating that in his estimation the author "plunged into his subject only to the minimal level required to produce a popular biography."²⁵⁶ He concluded his review with the comment that it was doubtful that the study would be of any lasting value but the nonprofessional reader might find it interesting enough to be worthwhile reading.²⁵⁷

As confirmation of Professor Whisker's analysis, not one single article or essay is cited in the bibliography. In fact, almost all the references listed, other than the usual Paine biographies, are general textbooks rather than specific works that would include some outstanding critical analysis.

Rebel! was compared with both the Audrey Williamson and David F. Hawke treatments. Critic Alfred Stern determined that the Gerson study did not "illuminate the violative Paine's psyche as successfully as David Freeman Hawke's brilliant Paine, but is considerably superior to Audrey Williamson's Thomas Paine." . . .²⁵⁸ Professor Cecelia M. Kenyon also criticizes the Gerson study from the academic point of view. She reiterates the appraisals of other critics as to the obvious deficiency of serious scholarship and adds that the author's knowledge is inadequate in that he lacks real depth in fully understanding eighteenth-century America. She concluded with the following statement:

"For the scholar, and for the general reader who wants an authoritative as well as an absorbingly interesting biography, David Freeman Hawke's 'Paine' is undoubtedly the better choice."²⁵⁹

Professor David Freeman Hawke's Paine was published a month after the Gerson study on May 1, 1974. This treatment included all those necessary elements for consideration as an earnest, scholarly, biographical study. It was a lengthy treatment which encompassed some 500 pages of text, including chapter notes, annotated bibliography and index.

Once more, Thomas Paine's life from infancy to fame and ultimate obscurity was described by the biographer. In this case, an in depth study of character and circumstance, objectively considered and evaluated resulted from this new biography.

Dr. Hawke had written six other books, including a biography of Benjamin Rush, before he attempted to capture the illusive Mr. Paine. The publisher's jacket defined Dr. Hawke's objective in writing this new study as an endeavor to reveal the complexities of this generally misunderstood patriot so that he would emerge as he truly was, temperamental and jealous of his fame, yet a gentle and somewhat naïve idealist. Thus the ambition of Dr. Hawke was to present Paine as close to his authentic self as possible. The personal traits, habits and foibles of the great idealogue were carefully reconstructed within the environment of eighteenth-century England, France and America.

Some of the most captivating moments to be found in the Hawke treatment concern the comparing and contrasting of personalities,

Paine's with other notables of his era. For instance, the author contrasted the writing style of both Tom Paine and Benjamin Rush, his friend and confidant, thus:

Writing, generally a torture for Paine, came easily for Rush. A brief essay that might take Paine days, even weeks, built sentence by sentence, Rush could dash off in an evening, polishing it the next day between visits from patients.²⁶⁰

After illustrating one example of obvious contrast, Dr. Hawke proceeded to illuminate some points the two men had in common:

Still, the two men had much in common. They were alike temperamentally, blunt and opinionated. Both had been befriended by Benjamin Franklin and revered him. Both felt spurned by the society they had been reared in.²⁶¹

Another interesting innovative interpretation that Dr. Hawke exhibited was to agree with Crane Brinton that Paine's formal education produced a mind "empty of the cultural and political traditions that inhibited educated contemporaries against change." He continued, "Ignorance, which carried lesser men into dark, narrow, and bigoted lives, freed Paine's lively intellect to look at the world in a fresh way."²⁶² Thus, it was Dr. Hawke's conviction that academic ignorance was bliss for Paine whose mind was unimcumbered with cultural and political traditions that led to inhibitions.

Dr. Hawke significantly contributes to the study of Tom Paine's journalism as he discusses all of Paine's major works and their influence. Like Harry Hayden Clark and others, he believes that Paine's greatest gift lay in his ability to introduce complicated political, economic and social ideas into a language that anyone could comprehend.

He could reduce the complex into understandable, simple phrases.

Dr. Hawke was convinced that Thomas Paine's elegant simplicity made academic issues understandable to the masses.

According to Hawke, the personal report was first introduced into the field of journalism by Thomas Paine as he reported contemporary events in a vivid, emotional style. This ability to capture the imagination and appeal to the senses of the average reader produced a new species of writer and a new brand of writing. No problem seemed too complicated, too remote for Paine to handle. In his own way Paine confidently reduced whatever obstacles he encountered with oversimplification.²⁶³ Perhaps, his writing was accepted so quickly because society was ready for a change and Tom Paine entered the picture at the perfect time of the American Revolution.

The critics gave Paine fine reviews. The study was lauded for being scholarly, stylishly written and highly informative. Alfred Stern, who had reviewed the two recent biographical efforts by Audrey Williamson and Noel Gerson-Samuel Edwards, remarked that Hawke's work was the best biography on Paine that he had ever read. He applauded it as "a superb psycho-history, tragicomic study of a manic genius, writer, engineer and gadfly."²⁶⁴ He remarked further that Dr. Hawke's painstaking research had produced a remarkable character study within a fine historical framework.²⁶⁵

The New Yorker Magazine review stated, "Thomas Paine, a singularly injudicious man, requires an exceptionally judicious biographer and in Mr. Hawke he has at last got one."²⁶⁶

Another reviewer, F. M. Brodie, for the New Republic, commented that although Mr. Hawke had examined a great bulk of material on Paine in the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, and had added some new material from French newspaper sources, his omission of footnotes deterred his volume from being considered notably superior to A. O. Aldridge's fine treatment published with footnotes.²⁶⁷ Interestingly enough, both the Aldridge and Hawke studies incorporated the same footnoting method, placing the documentation at the conclusion of the text. The footnoting style was also criticized by Carl B. Cone of the University of Kentucky. Dr. Cone did not condemn Hawke for placing his notes at the end of the book rather than using the preferable footnoting page by page, but he did add, "The documentation is full but a bit awkward."²⁶⁸ Dr. Cone proceeds to admire Hawke's objectivity in handling Paine, a man who possessed many undesirable, if not obnoxious faults. Dr. Hawke's treatment is praised as an honest presentation, picturing Tom Paine as an individual "whose person, personality, and conduct could be agreeable or disagreeable, depending on the observer and the circumstances."²⁶⁹

Cecelia M. Kenyon was not in agreement with the Cone appraisal of Dr. Hawke's objectivity. She acclaimed the study as a product of meticulous scholarship, thorough and comprehensive, balanced and thought provoking. However, her one criticism was "a wistful one; he has so disciplined himself to present this very difficult and sometimes exasperating man fairly and judiciously that he has, I fear, inhibited a talent for perceptive interpretation and insight."²⁷⁰

The finest tribute to Dr. Hawke's treatment appeared in Newsweek on May 6, 1974. The reviewer stated his appraisal in the following manner:

Hawke is careful to explain that Paine was not an original thinker, or a wild-eyed radical, but rather a man who perfectly reflected the discontent of his times and expressed it boldly: his genius lay in his ability to translate complex issues into a language that the masses could understand, a language that moved men to action. . . . [This] book seems to me an exemplary biography, one that is by no means uncritical of its subject.²⁷¹

When Dr. Hawke was asked by this researcher if his attitudes had changed in any significant way toward Thomas Paine, he replied that after studying Paine from the typical viewpoint of "a radical who stirred up two revolutions and tried to create a third in England, I came away convinced he was less a radical than I once thought--that is, he tended to react much more than I expected to events."²⁷² Dr. Hawke continued, "His ideas on the American Revolution reflected those of the circle he moved within here. His ideas on the French Revolution reflected those of the circles he moved in there."²⁷³ Dr. Hawke then remarked about Paine's Age of Reason that, although it was considered blasphemous in America, it was not judged that way by his acquaintances in Paris where he wrote it.

Professor Hawke gracefully volunteered more information than this researcher had originally requested. He added his own question concerning what he might have omitted from his book that he wished he could have included. In answering this question, Dr. Hawke stated that "all of the basic ideas and much of the fury in Common Sense stemmed from Benjamin Franklin."²⁷⁴ He went on to say that Franklin's

personal hatred for King George III and his favoring a single legislative assembly must have influenced Paine's thinking. Dr. Hawke concluded with an explanation as to why he did not include this hypothesis about Benjamin Franklin's obvious influence behind Paine's writing, because "I could dredge up no evidence to make the point."²⁷⁵

Tom Paine and Revolutionary America is the most recent biographical study to be published. This 1976 edition was written by Professor Eric Foner, who is an associate professor at City College of New York. The objective of this treatment is to probe the relationship of Tom Paine and his time within the background of the social, economic and political conditions of Revolutionary America.

Dr. Foner sets as his personal goal an attempt to explain Paine, the man, and his ideology within the context of the eighteenth-century environment. As the author explains, "Paine's writings helped to shape the history of the Age of Revolution, but they themselves were shaped by Paine's own experiences and by the rapid social and political changes American society underwent in the revolutionary era."²⁷⁶

The final results of Dr. Foner's creative research is not a comprehensive biographical study, but rather a social, political and economic report of a man and his ideas as they fit into the America of the 1770's. The author is basically concerned with analyzing the American segment in Paine's life. However, he also traces the history of Paine's reputation through his experiences in England, France and last years in the United States. This information is given in an "Epilogue" section of the book.

Dr. Foner intentionally emphasizes Thomas Paine's connections and relationships with the artisans and lower classes in Philadelphia. The chapter entitled "Paine's Philadelphia" resounds with a vivid portrayal of the social and economic conditions and their effects upon the lower levels of society. It was within this particular setting that "like a seed transplanted from a hostile environment to friendly soil, Paine's latent radicalism, nourished by his experiences in England, would suddenly blossom in the New World."²⁷⁷

Similar to Dr. Hawke, Eric Foner takes pleasure in contrasting Paine's philosophy with that of other notables such as Benjamin Rush, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Unlike the Hawke treatment, however, Dr. Foner does not compare and contrast personalities, only their respective ideologies.

This treatment was documented with a "Note Section" where each chapter was included with a listing of resources in a concise annotated bibliographical form. An index was also included in the treatment along with three pages of "Acknowledgements."

There are very few reviews available at this time in the usual historical, economic and political science bulletins and quarterlies. Nevertheless, there are a few reviews available in outstanding national newspapers and magazines. From the tenor of their criticism these evaluations contrast in their estimation as to the general effectiveness of the book in analyzing Tom Paine and his influential role in Revolutionary America. Eve Ottenberg of the Christian Science Monitor highly recommended Foner's work as a genuine accomplishment in the realm

of history, not biography. She was delighted by the author's detailed descriptions of the daily life of the artisan and lower classes in Philadelphia during the 1770's. In her opinion, Dr. Foner presented a sound argument for a reevaluation of the social causes behind the American Revolution. She added that the study "also contains a valuable comparison between urban and rural economic attitudes. . . ." ²⁷⁸

For Miss Ottenberg, Dr. Foner accomplishes a commendable task "by combining the history of a man with that of a mass movement. . . ." ²⁷⁹

With all taken into account, the Foner treatment reassesses and cements Thomas Paine's role "as a crucial and international thinker." ²⁸⁰

Mr. Garry Willis, reviewer for the New York Times, disagrees with Miss Ottenberg's analysis. In his estimation, Foner's objectives seem very promising as he endeavors to represent the man as a product of his environment, whose perfect timing aids in establishing his great reputation as a publicist and propagandist. The problem, as Mr. Willis views it, is that Dr. Foner endeavors to position Tom Paine in class terms, and the medium he uses is the artisan class in Philadelphia. Mr. Willis continued in saying that Foner's "artisan thesis" never develops beyond a loose definition and the supposed ties between Paine and this class are never supported to the degree demanded by comprehensive argument. ²⁸¹ He added that these bonds are artificial and meager, if not undefined by the author. The reviewer concluded that Dr. Foner's effort has produced an interesting interpretation in having Tom Paine represent an economic class. Much can be learned from the treatment, but the main thesis is never sufficiently developed and substantiated. ²⁸²

The Eric Foner treatment, published in 1976, completes this first section devoted to the discussion and analysis of those distinguished and infamous, significant and unimportant primary biographical studies of Thomas Paine.

The interest in writing about Paine, his life, career and historical significance, however, has not been entirely limited to the production of long discourses and formal biographies. A vast number of brief biographical sketches have been published over the past one hundred and fifty years. The next two chapters of this study of the treatment of Thomas Paine will be devoted to the examination of those sketches located in encyclopaedias, biographical dictionaries, academic theses, books, pamphlets and periodicals. This will be undertaken in hope that an even greater range of individual interpretation will be ascertained and will prove helpful in detecting any apparent patterns or trends in elucidation.

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CHAPTER IV

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES OF THOMAS PAINE IN
ENCYCLOPAEDIAS, BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARIES,
THESES, BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Every major encyclopaedia or biographical dictionary includes within its contents a biographical essay on Thomas Paine. Three of these biographical sketches on the life, career and influence of Thomas Paine are particularly noteworthy. An early account, published in the last decade of the nineteenth century, was expressly written for the Dictionary of National Biography. The author was Sir Leslie Stephen, English critic, man of letters and first editor of the Dictionary of National Biography. This accepted master of eighteenth-century philosophy and literature had written some rather derogatory remarks about Paine in his study History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, first published in 1876. Moncure Conway, residing in London at the time, took offense at Stephen's treatment, which he considered effective distortion of Paine's character and literary ability. He challenged the reliability of Stephen's research and accused him of exclusively using the Francis Oldys and James Cheetham treatments for his evaluation of Mr. Paine. While, himself, writing a paper on the subject, Conway discovered that these two accounts were the only biographies available in the London Library.¹ Deducing that these two treatments must have been the only sources he knew which Mr. Stephen could have used, Mr. Conway accused him of a "serious miscarriage of historical and literary justice."² Because of Leslie

Stephen's reputation and influence in the English intellectual community, Moncure Conway braved the storm and publicly condemned Stephen's lack of magnanimity and professional objectivity. As Conway expressed it, "Mr. Stephen, eminent as an agnostic and editor of a biographical dictionary, is assumed to be competent, and his disparagements of a fellow-heretic necessitated by verified facts." He continued, "His scholarly style has given new lease to vulgar slanders."³

Leslie Stephen, after investigating the possibility of his having perpetrated a serious blunder in objective scholarship, wrote a retraction, which appeared in The National Reformer on September 11, 1892. In this article he recanted his original position as being careless and erroneous. He stated simply and graciously that, "My only excuse, if it be an excuse, was the old one 'pure ignorance.' I will not ask whether or how far the ignorance was excusable."⁴ He, then, directly referred to Mr. Conway's article in the Fortnightly Review which had first called attention to his questionable treatment of Thomas Paine. Mr. Stephen declared that after reading Mr. Conway's exposure of his blunders, he altered his position in the second edition of History of English Thought. He remarked that perhaps the alterations were inadequate as he "was unable to attend properly to the revision."⁵ In any case, if a third edition was forthcoming, he would make sure that the questions concerning Tom Paine would be thoroughly investigated. He also expressed an eagerness to read Conway's own Paine biography, which had been only recently published. Mr. Stephen concluded that he hoped to write the essay on Paine for the Dictionary of National Biography at a later date. At that time, as his final judgment, Mr. Stephen declared that "it would be

a great pleasure for me if I find, as I expect to find, that he was greatly maligned, and to make some redress of my previous misguided remarks."⁶

Leslie Stephen's chance for writing the biographical essay for the Dictionary came to pass and the result was a concise, thoroughly objective, very influential, nonpartisan treatment of Thomas Paine.⁷

Before commenting further on the Paine sketch, a few remarks about Leslie Stephen might prove informative. Moncure D. Conway and Leslie Stephen had a great deal in common. Both came from prominent families, studied for the ministry, were ordained in orthodox denominations. Stephen, like Conway, developed an insatiable appetite for literature, philosophy and social causes. Mr. Stephen, however, had never taken his clerical vocation very seriously and in the summer of 1862 he underwent a momentous change in his life. His reading of the works of John Stuart Mill, Auguste Comte and Immanuel Kant had influenced his independent mind into rejecting the historical evidences of Christianity. As a result, he resigned his tutorship at Cambridge.⁸ Later, when questioned, Leslie Stephen remarked concerning his abandoning his religious convictions that he did not lose his faith, he merely discovered that he had never had any.⁹

Like Moncure Conway, Leslie Stephen was a firm backer of the Northern cause in the American Civil War and was an enthusiastic crusader for the antislavery movement. A declared agnostic, he became an influential challenger of all forms of orthodoxy which he declared unable to fulfill man's genuine spiritual needs.¹⁰

At the end of his life, Sir Leslie was made a Knight Commander of the Bath in 1902. Two years later he died of cancer in London.¹¹

The Paine biographical sketch included in the Dictionary of National Biography was clearly an objective evaluation. The author had concerned himself with presenting as accurate a picture of Paine and his influence upon the eighteenth century as possible. Although Mr. Stephen had recanted his original anti-Paine position, he did not overlook those traits of character he considered of a negative nature. He did not excuse or disregard Mr. Paine's drinking problem. As he stated, "It is admitted, however, that a charge of drinking was not without foundation."¹² He followed up this remark with comments and accounts from other biographers and critics.

Sir Leslie Stephen, in his conclusion, lauded Paine's courage and lack of mercenary motive even when "he attached an excessive importance to his own work, and was ready to accept the commonplace that his pen had been as efficient as Washington's sword."¹³ Concerning his effectiveness as a writer, Stephen wrote, "This singular power of clear, vigorous exposition made him unequalled as a pamphleteer in revolutionary times, when compromise was an absurdity."¹⁴

The Stephen essay is a fairly standard bibliographical entry in most of the modern studies of Paine. There is no doubt that this early influential account opened the door to institute greater scholarly treatment of Thomas Paine's political and religious thought in both England and the United States.

The historian, Professor Crane Brinton, wrote the Paine sketch for the Dictionary of American Biography in 1934. This effort offered

an interesting realistic interpretation with a definite American flavor. Many of Dr. Brinton's remarks in his analysis could be labeled judgmental, almost caustic, if the treatment did not include occasional sympathetic and laudatory commentary.

Dr. Brinton did not agree with those biographers who stressed Paine's Quakerism as the touchstone of his thought. He stated, "He referred frequently and proudly to his Quaker antecedents, and no doubt his feelings for the sanctity of the inner citadel of human consciousness had Quaker origins." He continued, "But Paine had no trace of Quaker humility, no capacity for mystic self-surrender, and, since he fought in two wars, no absolute doctrines of non-resistance."¹⁵

Perhaps the most significant and interesting observations that Crane Brinton introduced in his biographical essay are as follows:

- (1) Thomas Paine's trials and tribulations in France were exaggerated.¹⁶
- (2) Gouverneur Morris was not the villain as many biographers have pictured him. He used common sense and tact in the Luxembourg matter.¹⁷
- (3) Thomas Paine illustrated delusions of persecution as shown by his writing his "Letter to George Washington."¹⁸
- (4) He nursed his inability to manage his own affairs as if it were a virtue.¹⁹
- (5) Thomas Paine suffered a "somewhat shabby martyrdom" during his last years in America, but "a happy, honored Paine is inconceivable in any world short of his own ideal one."²⁰
- (6) Thomas Paine was not an original thinker and appeared artless at times. "But in general he succeeds admirably in being interesting, understandable, and irritating--necessary virtues of a revolutionary journalist."²¹

Dr. Brinton's conclusion describing the reasons for Thomas Paine's label of infamy are as follows:

The discredit into which Paine fell is no doubt explicable partly be the fact that he was temperamentally a rebel, a socially disreputable professional agitator, and that America has done its best to live down this aspect of its origins; partly by the fact that his life was an unheroic sequence of purely literary struggles.²²

Harry Hayden Clark considered Crane Brinton's treatment along with that of Leslie Stephen as "the most authoritative short lives."²³ David Freeman Hawke stated that in his judgment the Brinton essay was the best written on Thomas Paine. It is quite easily discernable that Dr. Hawke was influenced by Dr. Brinton's treatment, for they both take almost identical positions on what they consider obvious faults in Paine's character and attitude.

Dr. Brinton's attitude toward Thomas Paine had not changed to any great degree by the time his highly acclaimed study, The Anatomy of Revolution, was published in 1938. His investigation of revolution would not have been complete without a discussion of Thomas Paine. In this instance, Dr. Brinton introduced what might be considered the most concise biographical sketch, remarkedly complete but written in less than 200 words.

Thomas Paine, who managed to involve himself in two revolutions, the American and the French, is still another revolutionist who amounted to very little before his revolutions. When he sailed for America in 1774 he was thirty-eight, certainly no longer a young man. He came from East-Anglian Quaker stock, and had picked up an eighteenth-century education, chiefly in the sciences and in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, while pursuing half-a-dozen different occupations from privateering to staymaking and shopkeeping. He had made an unsuccessful marriage, been in and out of the excise twice, acquired a reputation as the town "atheist" of Lewes in Sussex, and had led

an unsuccessful and somewhat premature attempt at lobbying in the interest of his fellow excisemen. Paine arrived in Philadelphia like many another European, an unsuccessful man looking for a new start. The revolution gave it to him, and Common Sense made him a distinguished publicist. Paine was the professional radical, the crusading journalist, the religious rationalist, a man who in quiet times could hardly have been more than another Bradlaugh.²⁵

Philip S. Foner, twenty-nine years after publishing his Complete Writings, wrote a biographical sketch for the Encyclopaedia Britannica Macropaedia.²⁶ This recent 1974 edition supplied Dr. Foner with an opportunity to review his opinions of Thomas Paine and his influence.

The essay is certainly mild and mellowed in comparison with his earlier biographical treatment included in The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine. Dr. Foner, in this latest effort, is still partisan in his deep appreciation for Paine and his contributions to the world, but the necessary objectivity is also quite evident. The result is a well-written, objective and concise enumeration of those major facts and events in the life and career of Thomas Paine. The essay concludes with a listing of his major works, followed by a short annotated bibliography.

Theses and Dissertations

In the last twenty-eight years one thesis and four dissertations about Thomas Paine have been produced. The earliest effort was a master's thesis, "Evolution of Thomas Paine's 'Common Sense,'" written by James McCormack for the Department of English at St. John's University in Brooklyn, New York. This thesis, completed in 1947, concerned the reaction to Paine's first great treatise, Common Sense,

and the reasons for its profound effectiveness upon the American Revolution.

Mr. McCormack applauded Thomas Paine's dynamic style and the ultimate consequences upon this particular period in American History. He described the influence of Common Sense as having served "to supply the spirit and the spirituality of the revolution."²⁷

Perhaps the most interesting comment made by Mr. McCormack was that "Paine elevated the status of the revolution from that of a war to that of a crusade."²⁸ Other than this statement, nothing of significance in reappraisal or new material was revealed in this thesis. Consequently it is not referred to as a source in any biographical or critical study on Thomas Paine.

One year later, in 1948, Caroline G. Mercer completed her doctoral dissertation for the University of Chicago English Department. Dr. Mercer's field was eighteenth-century English literature. In this dissertation, Dr. Mercer analyzed the literary methods and the system of persuasion used by Tom Paine in his writings. "The Rhetorical Method of Thomas Paine," had as its objective "to study Paine as a writer, a writer of a particular kind."²⁹ She continued to explain her aims in that her study considered "the means Paine used to persuade his audience and the relationships among the various means, in an attempt to see whether the method is all of a piece, and how it may be defined and analyzed."³⁰ Therefore, this study examines Paine's theory and practice jointly in an effort to dissect those elements within his rhetorical method.

Dr. Mercer, in her final chapter, listed nine concluding points that are noteworthy of mention. First, in searching for consistency in Paine's writing, one must look for it in the method, not in the detail of his statements.³¹ Secondly, Mercer determined that Paine had a characteristic method but was not necessarily original in many of his arguments. In fact, many of his propositions can be easily located in the works of contemporary authors.³² The third conclusion was that Thomas Paine definitely used a system to hold together his arguments.³³ The fourth point stressed by Dr. Mercer was that Paine emphasized, in his arguments, "the dignity of the rational man who has rights and should exercise them." She continued, "The appeal to the individual self-interest is strong, but self-interest and social welfare are shown to coincide."³⁴ The fifth point was that feelings and emotion cooperate in harmony in Paine's method.³⁵ Another interesting nuance in Paine's literary method was that he gave his public the creation of admirable character traits for his readers to imitate.³⁶ The seventh proposition made by the author was that generally Paine's methodology seemed to serve a persuasion designed for a wide audience. "Its arguments and appeals are broad, having to do with large natural laws, with basic human traits, and with effects that every one prizes--prosperity and peace."³⁷ The eighth peculiar factor within Paine's method was that it was carefully contrived to persuade a large audience to accept change and bring about new social reforms. This persuasion was seemingly intended to be a continuation of reassurance and stimulation.³⁸ The final specific point concerning

Thomas Paine's literary style was that he appealed to his readers' adventurous spirit as much as to their innate "confidence in natural principles and their prudent attention to self-interest, thus persuading them to new courses of action and new ideas."³⁹

Other than this dissertation being an interpretative study of the rhetorical aspects within the literary style of Thomas Paine, Dr. Mercer expressed her complete agreement with Harry Hayden Clark's basic hypothesis that Paine's scientific studies had a definite bearing upon his political views and literary practice. Dr. Mercer also believed, as did Clark, that throughout his writing, Paine continually used the physical cosmos and nature as his standard of perfection.⁴⁰

The importance of the Mercer treatment was not that a great amount of new information on Paine had been amassed, but that another critical analysis of his literary style had been achieved. Dr. Mercer's effort was not a mere copy of Harry H. Clark's work. Her detailed investigation of Paine's methodology was creative and highly instructive, especially to those students of Mr. Paine who believe that his greatest contribution to the world was through his literary masterpieces.

Two dissertations were produced during the year 1951. Both of these treatments have been used as reference sources in several recent Paine biographies. "The Common Man Philosophy of Thomas Paine: A Study of the Political Ideas of Paine" by Brother Dominic Elder was written for the Department of Political Science at Notre Dame University. The author's aim was neither to canonize his subject nor to

decry heresy, but to present a study of Paine's philosophy of "the common man."⁴¹

In the last chapter (Chapter 7), Brother Dominic drew up his conclusion. Here he stated Thomas Paine's common man philosophy. He explained briefly those basic beliefs within Paine's humanitarianism.

He refused to accept the idea that any superior group of individuals, or a particular race or family, possessed the exclusive intellectual endowment or capacity to govern. Although favoring equal rights of all men, he did admit of inequality of talent; yet he was confident that the republicanism he favored would bring this talent to the fore. Given the facts of public issues touching their experiences, he believed that the people, governing by the majority principle, would keep government responsible to their interests.⁴²

The author ascribed the origin of Thomas Paine's love of the common man as "stemmed from his Quaker background, but found fresh vitality and realization through his deism." He continued, "he substituted service to mankind for service to God; in fact, he maintained that the only way to serve God was by the service rendered to His creatures."⁴³

This dissertation was published the following year, in 1952. Harry Hayden Clark included the treatment in the bibliography in Representative Selections. He praised the effort for its general scholarly tone, the documentation and objectivity. He added a personal comment which further illustrated the objectivity presented in this compassionate study, "It is heartening to see that Notre Dame and the Catholic Church have subsidized this sympathetic dissertation on Paine's political ideas."⁴⁴ The praise was well deserved because

Brother Dominic did succeed in keeping his own religious persuasion practically undetectable.

Dr. Jerome Wilson, in his review of the Elder effort, remarked that even though the dissertation offered no new insights, it did summarize and expand on many former studies on the political philosophy of Thomas Paine.⁴⁵

Another doctoral dissertation completed in 1951 was written by Arnold Kinsey King at the University of Chicago. Entitled "Thomas Paine in America, 1774-1787," this treatment produced an exhaustive, comprehensive analysis of Paine's life, career, writing and general influence during those years.

David F. Hawke used the King effort in his own biography, Paine, and appraised the treatment as "an excellent piece of research. King missed little concerning Paine for the years he covers."⁴⁶

Dr. King placed the greater part of his emphasis upon Paine's writing and the contemporary reaction to it. He included sources from newspapers and a variety of correspondence in setting the tone for a study of the response to such works as Common Sense, The Crisis Papers, and Public Good. This precise study on the general effects of Common Sense was especially noteworthy because Dr. King gave strong evidence that this particular pamphlet had a monumental effect upon the colonies.

In his research, the author discussed the major biographies and compilations of Thomas Paine and emphasized some of the shortcomings and inaccuracies appearing especially in the Moncure Conway and Frank Smith treatments. The major portion of those mistakes discovered by

Dr. King concern the necessity of using great caution when attributing Paine's authorship to certain articles simply because they may contain "Quakerisms, uncommon references to English life and especially Lewes and London." He continued, or using "figures of speech and turns of thought which are repeated in very much the same words in his known works of the general period."⁴⁷

Dr. King did not disagree with some of the major theses concerning what factors influenced Tom Paine to become a great revolutionary figure. However, it was his contention that a more reasonable explanation would seem to be that he arrived in America at a most opportune time. Along with this perfect timing, Paine came with a "great natural talent, few fixed ideas, a dislike for the Old World system of class stratification in which he had fared so poorly, and with no vested interest except in the future."⁴⁸ Added to this, King stated, "He had a common man's passion for the practical and some of his Quaker father's humanitarian sympathies."⁴⁹ All these elements and conditions combined freed Paine to arise to the occasion and produce masterpieces that reproduced the spirit of the times and summarized public opinion.⁵⁰

The King treatment, fulfilling the requirements of academic erudition, was well documented with extensive footnoting and bibliography. Perhaps its main contribution to the field of Paine scholarship was in the comprehensive and critical analysis of the resulting influence of Paine's Common Sense, Crisis Papers and Public Good upon the American community.

Joseph Metzgar's dissertation, "Thomas Paine: A Study in Social and Intellectual History," was received and accepted by the Department of History at the University of New Mexico in 1965.

Dr. Metzgar endeavored to psychoanalyze the basic philosophical make-up of Thomas Paine within the intellectual context of his age, the Enlightenment. The author expressed his ultimate objective "to determine how far behind or ahead of his time was Thomas Paine."⁵¹ The questions he intended to answer were, first, what was Paine's relationship to the Enlightenment as can be determined by the study of his political, social or scientific thought? The second question concerning Paine, attempted by the author, was what were his significant contributions to social and intellectual history?⁵²

By comparing and contrasting Thomas Paine's political and social philosophy with the contemporary thought of the day, Dr. Metzgar arrived at the following conclusions.

Thomas Paine traveled beyond the Enlightenment in promoting a far more practical and utilitarian approach to political and social issues. He was influenced by the ideas of such eminent thinkers as John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau and he used traditional abstract logic so commonplace during the Enlightenment, but he infused a pragmatism and utilitarianism that stamped his writing as having a peculiarity of its own. For instance, "equilibrium and justice were his ideals."⁵³ It is a tribute to him that these practical principles found themselves incorporated years later into the constitutions of many advanced nations.⁵⁴

According to Dr. Metzgar, Thomas Paine evolved his own peculiar emphasis on the priority of the human will over all forms of pre-destination or determinism. For him, "Man had the initiative in his history in spite of the conditioning, not determining, elements in his environment."⁵⁵ The uniqueness in Paine's concept was that he "could foresee and foretell that man could reach certain goals, if he would do certain necessary things. It was all up to man."⁵⁶

Thomas Paine, as did his contemporaries, believed that natural laws could be discovered and analyzed by the proper application of reason aided by the devices and methods of science. In this respect he was not unique or inventive, his cosmology differed little from the standard optimistic epistemology of the Enlightenment.⁵⁷

Dr. Metzgar concluded that, in essence, Thomas Paine was representative of his times, but had certain peculiarities that gave his writing a certain pragmatic and utilitarian flavor. He was not a genius, but had broad interests, manifested high intelligence and keen perception. These factors, further enhanced by obvious literary talent, produced an historical figure who did influence American and European intellectual thought.

Biographical Essays in Books and Pamphlets

Moncure D. Conway's biography and compilation of the writings of Thomas Paine seemingly laid the groundwork for numerous future attempts at analyzing the elusive Mr. Paine. The once forbidden subject and his dramatic contribution in the fields of political, intellectual and social thought was no longer considered taboo. There is little

question that Mr. Conway's scholarly treatment served to help lift the stigma of disgrace and infamy from the name of Tom Paine. However, the environment for a reconsideration and acceptance of Paine and his influence had already been created by a movement in the late nineteenth century toward liberalism in theology. These independent thinkers who invaded the sanctuary openly pursued all avenues of intellectual liberty. They appeared in all Protestant denominations and proposed the necessity of a generosity and charity toward divergent religious opinion. In essence, these liberal theologians wished to free religion "from obscurantism and creedal bondage so as to give man's moral and rational powers larger scope."⁵⁸ The most significant consequence from this liberal movement within Protestant seminaries and denominations was that the churches were introduced to "the world of modern science, scholarship, philosophy, and global knowledge."⁵⁹ A domestication of modern religious ideas and values resulted. Traditional orthodoxy found itself confronted with new support for religious skepticism and agnosticism. This continual search for the rational, begun during the Enlightenment, was thus carried forward, energized and formalized in the late nineteenth century.⁶⁰ Thomas Paine, the man and his ideas, could now be reviewed and evaluated in the light of new liberal thought. Perhaps the infamous infidel had something worthwhile to say after all.

John Eleazer Remsburg, a well-known American freethinker, wrote biographical sketches of Paine in both his books, The Fathers of Our Republic and Six Historic Americans. The main theme emphasized

in Mr. Remsburg's chapter on Tom Paine in The Fathers of Our Republic was to deliver a concise retort to the charge that he was an atheist. The author stated that, "In no other works that I have read are the terms God and Creator used more frequently or in a more reverential manner, than in his."⁶¹ He then referred to Paine's recognition of a Supreme Being in The Age of Reason which occurred no less than three hundred times throughout the text.⁶² Remsburg followed through with illustrative excerpts from The Age of Reason to prove the point that Paine was not an atheist. After having completed his vindication of Tom Paine, the author moved forward to produce evidence that confirmed the misrepresentation and false charges that had been directed toward other founding fathers such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and George Washington.⁶³

Several years later, John Remsburg wrote his Six Historic Americans. In this treatment, he idolized those freethinking fathers and saviours of the American Republic, Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant. In discussing Tom Paine, Remsburg endeavored to establish the negative of the following claims: (1) Was Paine an Atheist? (2) Was he a Christian? (3) Did he recant?⁶⁴

The author lauded and praised Paine for his principles and his willingness to stand for what he believed. However, it was not long before Mr. Remsburg's genuine motive was discerned. The clear objective, disregarding the partisan appraisal of Paine, was to condemn and refute Christian doctrine and expose the false claims of the Church.

No new insights and no strikingly original interpretation were forthcoming in this effort. Mr. Remsburg's personal bias was vividly stated in his conclusion of the chapter on Thomas Paine.

Thomas Paine did not recant. But the Church is recanting. On her death-bed tenet after tenet of the absurd and cruel creed which Paine opposed is being renounced by her. Time will witness the renunciation of her last dogma, and her death. Then will the vindication of Thomas Paine and the "Age of Reason" be complete.⁶⁵

In 1912, John Joseph Conway published his book, Footprints of Famous Americans in Paris. Chapter Five was devoted exclusively to a study of Tom Paine and his influence during the French Revolution. It undertook, in the space of seven pages, to present those salient facts that illuminated Paine's effect upon this, his second revolution. The treatment, according to one critic, was partisan, offered no new evidence or information and was a rather cursory attempt to describe those eventful years Paine spent in Paris.⁶⁶

One of the more important and informative essays for students of Thomas Paine was to be found in the book, At the Sign of the Bull, Lewes. The Bull House and adjoining Chapel were quite famous in this small country town in Sussex. It was in Bull House that Tom Paine was a lodger and met the owner's daughter, Elizabeth Ollive, whom he later married. Mr. Samuel Ollive, future father-in-law of Paine, had inherited the residence with its small tobacco shop, from his father, the Reverend John Ollive, who had been the minister of the adjoining Chapel from 1711 to 1740.⁶⁷ According to J. M. Connell, the author of the essay, "Thomas Paine's Residence in Lewes," there was no evidence that Paine and his wife attended the Chapel next door or had any church connection in Lewes.⁶⁸

In an earlier effort, the Reverend Connell had published his findings in a book entitled The Story of an Old Meeting House. Here he declared that the Westgate Chapel, next door to Bull House, had never been, at any time, used by the Quakers. The Chapel was originally Calvinist in persuasion but in time became Unitarian.⁶⁹ This evidence clearly denoting the Ollives' Calvinist connections was a significant addition to further factual accuracy in the account of Thomas Paine's early years.

J. M. Connell also endeavored to analyze in depth the White Hart Club and its effect upon Thomas Paine. According to the Reverend Connell, "His membership of it must be reckoned as marking an important stage in his development, preparing him unconsciously for the next great part he was destined to play in world affairs."⁷⁰ It was through this environment, the constant debate and writing of prose and verse for the amusement of the membership, that Paine was subconsciously prepared for his future role in history. It was the contention of the author that without those nights at the White Hart Club, "there might have been no movement for American independence, and the course of history might in other respects have been very different from what it has been."⁷¹

In 1937, the Reverend Connell wrote a short biographical sketch of Paine for The Hibbert Journal. This sketch, "Thomas Paine--The Man as He Was. A Bicentenary Notice," further discussed Paine's life in Lewes. The essay, a mere thirteen pages in length, was appreciative in tone, but offered little new biographical information.⁷²

In July, 1925, the Fabian Society published a pamphlet, Thomas Paine, authored by Kingsley Martin. The tract contained a great deal of biographical information, but the main emphasis was placed on illustrating the extent to which modern socialists accept the political and economic doctrines of Thomas Paine.⁷³

The author employed Paine as a catalyst, an instrument to exemplify the Fabian point of view. Mr. Martin condemned both the Utilitarians and Evangelical Christians for their misinterpretation of natural rights and private property. Furthermore, the author stated that laissez-faire was to blame for most of Britain's problems in political theory in the nineteenth century. It was his contention that without question Britain should have listened to Tom Paine and not to Jeremy Bentham concerning state interference in the economic sphere.⁷⁴ Along this same line of thought, Martin proceeded to emphasize that, in his estimation, Thomas Paine's most remarkable contribution to mankind lay in his understanding that some natural rights needed government regulation, especially in the province of economics. He explained his belief in the following manner:

The most remarkable of all Paine's claims to fame is that he, a man of middle class origin himself, saw the distinction between the old and new form of property, and advocated the rights of private property, not as the Utilitarians in practice did, for the advantage of the new industrial capitalist, but also for the wage earner whose only property was his labour.⁷⁵

The pamphlet does deliver a good, concise analysis of the evolution of English political and economic thought through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, it must be remembered that the

tract was written to support a particular point of view and thus some objectivity was lost in the process.

The eminent American author, editor, poet and critic, Carl Van Doren, included a biographical essay of Thomas Paine in the book, American Writers on American Literature. The first two pages of his essay contained a short biographical sketch of Paine. After this, Dr. Van Doren's main emphasis was placed on an analysis of Paine's writings and their effect upon the American and European scene. His comments on Common Sense and its direct influence on the sentiment for total separation from England are of particular interest. According to the author, the chief effect of Thomas Paine upon public opinion was that he "made the conflict seem essential and immense. No one else had so dramatically pointed out abuses or so daringly abused back."⁷⁶ It was a tribute to Paine that he was able to rally the undecided and give "form to dull and cloudy impulses."⁷⁷ Van Doren attributed to Paine the compliment that he was responsible for "the drift, if it was not a flood, of sentiment for independence which rose to the Declaration in July of that same year."⁷⁸

The author, when discussing those later works written by Thomas Paine while in Europe, uniquely interpreted those pamphlets as belonging to American literature "in the sense that they are sequels to Common Sense and the Crisis, the elaborations of axioms already tested and now applied to the new circumstances."⁷⁹

Like many other biographers, historians and critics, Dr. Van Doren cited Paine's Age of Reason as being the major cause of his

public ostracism upon his return to the United States. Neither Britain nor America, his adopted country, ever forgave him and his remaining years were "taken up with answers to his critics and with vexations which he had incurred by his plain speaking."⁸⁰ The truth of the matter was, according to Van Doren, "that to the devout he must seem now and then to have stabled his horse in a cathedral and to have hooted before the altar."⁸¹ The result was "open season" declared against this self-avowed infidel by the clergy and solid laymen whom Paine himself had labeled enemies of truth. Not only was all that he had done for the American cause wiped away by his treatise against Christianity, but "there was no insult which the orthodox or the vulgar did not feel it proper to offer him. . . ."⁸² Scandal followed him everywhere, and the zealous felt it only fair and praiseworthy to continue or invent stories about him which added to further defame his character and influence.

In his conclusion, Dr. Van Doren remarked about the general effects of Paine's works today. In his estimation, Thomas Paine still speaks to the common man in a language he can clearly understand. Furthermore, it really does not matter that most of his arguments were not unique; it was through his creativity that they were given a form which would last for centuries and his words would "sound both timeless and immediate."⁸³

In 1942, Carl Van Doren, aided by Lyman Bryson, then Director of the Columbia Broadcasting System's Department of Education, and Jacques Barzun, French historian and critic, met together in a panel

radio program. On one occasion the panelists discussed the differences between Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine from their political idealism to their styles of writing. Some of the conclusions the panel reached were as follows: (1) Edmund Burke was the superior political scientist. (2) Thomas Paine was the greater hero, in that he was willing to get into trouble to prove a point. (3) The main difference in the two writing styles was the difference between richness [Burke] and brightness [Paine]. (4) All the panelists agreed that both types of men were necessary and both contributed significantly to political philosophy.

Donald O. Wagner, a history instructor at New York University, devoted twenty-six pages of his book, Social Reformers: Adam Smith to John Dewey, to a discussion of Tom Paine. His biographical essay had as its main emphasis Paine as a social reformer and a man of the people.

The author spent the first few pages describing the effects of Paine's boyhood experiences on his character and philosophy. In his opinion, the rotten borough condition of Thetford under the Duke of Grafton's control served as a memorable example to Paine when he came later to deal with the abuses of charters and corporations in his Rights of Man.⁸⁴ Also personal, more intimate influences made their indelible mark upon Tom Paine. For example, the "somber aspects of Quakerism oppressed him," however, "the Quaker's bent toward democracy and hatred of slavery colored Paine's own views later on."⁸⁵

When discussing the effects of Paine's Age of Reason on his own life, Mr. Wagner concluded that the religious issue clouded his

last years. Even his later pamphlets failed to reestablish his fame and influence. No matter what he said, the "professional" Christians knew an atheist when they saw one.⁸⁶

As concerning Thomas Paine's effectiveness as a social reformer, Mr. Wagner affirmed the common conclusion that Paine appealed to the common man in a language he could easily understand. Also, he insisted on the necessity of significant social change. Wagner remarked that to Paine in his writings, laissez-faire often appeared "to conflict with a decided bias in favor of state socialism."⁸⁷ Perhaps this was due to his trying to protect the property interests of the working people against the continual advancement of new industrial capitalism.

In his effort to promote the obvious superiority of "natural religion" for all mankind, Paine's religious views alienated that large section of the working class which still held to their traditional orthodoxy.⁸⁸ Thus, considering all the factors, Thomas Paine's "destructive and negative opinions created a far greater impression than the positive side of his doctrines, and this fact still further limited his influence."⁸⁹

Here again another historian saw the influence of Thomas Paine curtailed and undermined by his religious views as expressed in The Age of Reason. He had alienated the religious sensitivity of the majority of the people, and they were not going to let him forget it.

Jesuit Father Joseph H. Fichter devoted an entire chapter in his book, Roots of Change, to a discussion of Thomas Paine as a great social reformer. This "Prince of Pamphleteers," according to Father Fichter, spent his life fighting for the common man. Thomas Paine's true importance

lay in the fact that he set as his sole duty the fight of the oppressed against those who oppressed them.⁹⁰ Through his writing he was able "to spread ideas for the alleviation of the under-privileged, to bring to the notice of the poorly educated masses their possibilities of obtaining permanent freedom from oppression."⁹¹ By means of his propaganda, Paine agitated for tax reform, the establishment of labor unions, educational facilities for all classes and pensions for the aged. Yet, Fichter declared, Tom Paine was not a prophet because "a man is not ahead of his time; it is simply that peoples and governments are behind the times."⁹²

What gave Thomas Paine the knowledge and understanding of class consciousness and social corruption? According to Fichter, Paine was a product of his environment. The experiences he had gone through up to his thirty-seventh year gave him an in depth comprehension of the evils in English society. He "had been a part of the misery, poverty, degradation, and insecurity of slumdweller and agricultural workers in the midst of England's national prosperity."⁹³ His own intimacy with suffering and cruelty prepared him to fight for the oppressed. Thus, completely disillusioned with his homeland and full of hope for a new beginning, "he was ready now to address a whole people on the principles of democratic government."⁹⁴

Even though Fichter emphasized Paine's role as a conscientious social reformer, he examined the adverse effect of his religious views upon his reputation and influence. In discussing Tom Paine, the infidel, the author stated:

It is a sad record of history that Paine should be remembered in this day as the "Infidel" because of his religious prejudices, rather than as a social reformer. However, such is the case, and the sobriquet is given to him justly. It was the fault of a proud nature that demanded freedom even from the beneficent restraint of a god.⁹⁵

Father Fichter was careful to comment that although Paine prided himself in his rationalistic beliefs, he was never truly irreligious. His ridicule of Christian orthodoxy offended many people, but he was never as "black" as many pictured him to be. He was constantly before the public eye, therefore was open to having his vices and faults greatly magnified.⁹⁶

In commenting about Thomas Paine's Age of Reason and its consequences upon his reputation and career, Father Fichter declared that "the evil of his imprisonment caused the evil of his Age of Reason, for if he had remained a free man he probably never would have written it."⁹⁷ In any case, "Unpopularity was the price he paid for his attack upon religion."⁹⁸ As a direct result from his attack upon Christianity, Thomas Paine died a broken and ineffectual figure, held in disgrace in three countries, concluded Father Fichter.

An outstanding study entitled Victorian Prelude: A History of English Manners 1700-1830 came off the presses in 1941. This acclaimed book was written by Maurice J. Quinlan, who endeavored to investigate the development of social conservatism in England preceding the Victorian Era.

It was the author's thesis that Victorian conservatism was already developing in England during the late eighteenth century. As a consequence, by the early nineteenth century, Thomas Paine and his

Rights of Man and Age of Reason had little significant effect or influence upon the great majority of the people. Even though political conservatism was weakening in many respects, contrarily social conservatism was growing stronger each year.

Thomas Paine and his followers found themselves efficiently counteracted by John Reeves and his Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers. The Pitt Ministry earlier had decided to outlaw the works of Paine and of any other writer whose work attempted to undermine the existing order. The king, agreeing with his advisers, issued a proclamation instructing his officers to arrest writers and publishers of seditious literature.⁹⁹ Soon afterwards, a lawyer named John Reeves, who professed no connection with the administration of William Pitt, organized his Association. The first meeting was held in November, 1792, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in London.¹⁰⁰ The purpose was to counterattack and frustrate Jacobin literature and its influence in Britain. Bundles of anti-Jacobin tracts were distributed to the rural clergy and magistrates. Coffeehouses, inns, taverns, even barbershops received allotments for their customers. "Some of the more industrious members of the association even stitched anti-Jacobin pamphlets into copies of periodicals before they were sent to their subscribers."¹⁰¹ Tracts found their way into the hands of people of every profession and trade, no matter their economic circumstances. Thus, this material was more widely distributed and touched the lives of a larger audience than all the pro-Jacobin propaganda combined.¹⁰² The Association did its best to convince Englishmen, regardless

of class, that Tom Paine and those of his persuasion were traitors, scoundrels, and their republican ideas were false and dangerous. After all, liberty was available to every Briton, but equality was another matter, it was quite unnatural to the laws of society. The ancient prejudices against France were also brought before the public and, appealing to British nationalism, the Association condemned all such examples of Gallic foolishness and foppery.¹⁰³

According to Mr. Quinlan, the most effective and far-reaching counterattack came in an alliance between the Association and the Evangelicals. The evangelical books and tracts were far more influential in conditioning the mind of the British citizenry than were the republican and deistical works of Thomas Paine and others. As the author stated, while the general public was deprived of newspapers and other forms of cheap literature, they read what was available, the religious and moral tracts. As a consequence, "these publications circulated by the millions, and without serious competition they enjoyed almost ideal conditions in which to shape the opinions of readers."¹⁰⁴

Anti-Jacobin societies were, of course, important in their efforts to restrain seditious propaganda, but the religious and moral tracts, the periodicals like the Methodist Magazine, Evangelical Magazine, the Christian Observer, and Eclectic Review really contributed most to the establishment of social conservatism. These periodicals clearly reveal in character and intensity "the serious attitude that developed early in the nineteenth century."¹⁰⁵

There were prosecutions for the publishing of blasphemous works but some resulted in a reverse effect. Mr. Quinlan noted that before

the trial of publisher Richard Carlile and his associates, about 100 copies of Paine's Age of Reason were sold each month. However, after the trials took place the monthly sale of this particular book increased to approximately 900 copies.¹⁰⁶ The failure to successfully suppress blasphemous literature might have been interpreted as a defeat for political reactionarism if it had not been that "it was in no sense an indication that the masses favored skeptical views."¹⁰⁷ In fact, Mr. Quinlan concluded that without the publicity given to these works, venders would have sold few copies of Paine's Age of Reason and other similar deistical treatises because "the general reading public much preferred the Evangelical or near-Evangelical books and tracts of their time."¹⁰⁸ The evidence clearly points to the fact, continued the author, that although "political conservatism was weakening, social conservatism was growing stronger each year."¹⁰⁹

The Quinlan study, in the estimation of critic Harry Hayden Clark, was a useful addition to Paine scholarship in that it offered evidence concerning how John Reeves and his Association, along with other counter-propaganda forces, were able to exert a powerful influence in turning "the common people against Paine and his equalitarian crusade."¹¹⁰

In 1949 British political scientist and professor at Cambridge University, Sir Denis William Brogan, enlarged his 1937 anonymously authored article, "The English Voltaire, Tom Paine: Citizen of the World," into a twelve-page essay included in his textbook, American Themes. This reasonable and balanced critical study brought out some very interesting, contemplative points about Thomas Paine.

Professor Brogan, as the chapter title suggested, considered Paine "a citizen of the world," a lesser Voltaire for English-speaking freethinkers.¹¹¹ Disagreeing with other authorities and critics, Professor Brogan could not place any real emphasis on Paine's Quaker background. He maintained that Tom Paine was not a Quaker even though he had surface connections to the Society of Friends. In fact, according to Brogan, his real introduction to the American Quaker capital came through the skeptical Benjamin Franklin; Tom Paine had not sought them out on his own initiative.¹¹² In this regard, the author significantly limited the Quaker influence upon Paine and his thinking and alluded to the proposition that Quakerism was never truly a dominant factor in his life.

Another thought-provoking point brought out by Professor Brogan was that Tom Paine had a true sense of mission. He firmly believed that he could teach others of the superiority of American institutions over those of Europe.¹¹³

In discussing the effectiveness of Paine's American pamphlets, Common Sense and the Crisis Papers, Dr. Brogan was convinced that Crisis Number One was more important in that it restored the morale of American fighting forces and civilian population.¹¹⁴

A limitation which both benefited and plagued Tom Paine, according to the author, was that he had no historical conception about what the French people felt toward their monarchy. The lack of historical acumen benefited Paine in his debate with Edmund Burke because he "was able to score off Burke or off the weakest side of Burke, his excessive

reverence for the great."¹¹⁵ However, he had not the slightest comprehension of the significance of King Louis' flight to Varennes and why the people were so upset and angered by this attempt by their king to escape. Thomas Paine saw this as a perfect moment to "rejoice that the way was clear to get rid of an indefensible institution and thus save a great deal of money."¹¹⁶ Frankly, Paine was unable to understand that the American Revolution was a unique and peculiar rebellion as was the French peculiarly French. It was difficult for him to accept that his advice was not immediately taken for during the American Revolution he had been a main actor, "in the French he was a patient."¹¹⁷

Concerning Thomas Paine's religious beliefs and the effects incurred by his Age of Reason, Professor Brogan envisioned him as a fairly mild Bible critic. Much of what Paine wrote "was common form to the eighteenth-century deists who were more learned, as well as more polite assailants of revealed religion than Paine."¹¹⁸ The significant factor in this case was that the more learned, subtle critics had not written for the multitude. Thomas Paine aimed for his old audience, the intelligent, radical workingman and tradesman and he hit his target.¹¹⁹ This is what really angered the clergy and aristocracy against Paine. Professor Brogan explained the circumstances behind the American ostracism of Paine upon his return to the United States in the following way:

The great days of American deism were over; and though, as Henry Adams pointed out, it was absurd to think of the lay and clerical leaders of New England as obscurantist Calvinists, they did not want their nascent unitarianism preached in every village store by the local rebel--and that was what Paine did want.¹²⁰

Professor Brogan concluded his analysis of Thomas Paine's career and influence with the comment that few of his positive achievements

remain today even though he shared in the making of a nation, the United States of America. His contributions, though real enough, were "far less important than Paine believed."¹²¹ His writings neither destroyed monarchy nor religious orthodoxy nor a belief in the inspired nature of the Bible. All things considered, Edmund Burke was the realist because the vast majority of the people simply would not accept Tom Paine's ideal of the simple material and spiritual environment that he felt satisfied so completely. He was mistaken in not being able to fully comprehend that man had to have hope and ask more of life than meager uncomplicated existence.¹²²

In 1957, Gerald White Johnson published a colorful and provocative book entitled The Lunatic Fringe. A man of great talent, Dr. Johnson had held positions as editor, journalist, radio news commentator, professor of journalism and literature. He had authored many books on literature, political science and history, including a well-received biography of Woodrow Wilson.

The Lunatic Fringe endeavored to present a liberal viewpoint and shed light on the lives and actions of those men in history whose ideas were unacceptable to the majority of the people or to the highly vocal minority who posed as a majority, judge and jury. Dr. Johnson called Tom Paine the first member of the Lunatic Fringe and explained his admission into that unique body in the following statement:

"These are the times that try men's souls," wrote Tom Paine in the opening paragraph of The Crisis, and in the closing paragraph of the same essay he added, "I thank God that I fear not."

With these two sentences the first great member of the Lunatic Fringe qualified for inclusion in that body. He

saw that the souls of Americans were being tried by fire, and he had no fear of the outcome. Obviously he was a lunatic.¹²³

In the opinion of Dr. Johnson the honors and fame received by Thomas Paine through his writings, Common Sense and The Crisis, caused him to be labeled a prophet because "the lunacy of 1776 had been converted into magnificent prophecy."¹²⁴ The war had been won and those who had at one time been afraid were now the lunatics, while those, like Paine, who had no fear were considered sane and rational. Thus from 1776 to 1789 Thomas Paine "held the status of a major prophet and all Americans were eager to do him honor."¹²⁵

Nevertheless, the fame and acclaim did not last for Tom Paine for his adopted country turned against him and he descended in their eyes from the position of seer to that of pariah, an outcast to those who had at one time held him in high esteem. Dr. Johnson attributed this change in attitude, this fall from hero to villain, to the vulnerability of the American people to prevalent human weakness so visible in a self-governing republic, the "inability to endure contradiction without flying into blind rage."¹²⁶ In the judgment of the author, the American ostracism and defamation of Paine was "one of the most deplorable revelations of a national weakness."¹²⁷ Dr. Johnson explained his position by this statement:

It was in France that Paine was sent to jail for his opinions, not in this country. In this country he was merely sent to Coventry. But this means only that the case smirched the record of the people, not that of the government.¹²⁸

The author agreed that Thomas Paine made many mistakes, one of his greatest being the accusing of George Washington of treachery

in a public letter. By this attack he damned himself to lasting infamy in the eyes of the American people.¹²⁹

The Age of Reason was another factor that labeled Tom Paine both infidel and outcast. In the author's judgment, today we would receive this treatise as being no more than an attack on modern fundamentalism. However, in Paine's time, "the clergy chose to view it as an attack on all religion, thereby revealing the sacerdotal view that belief in God is immaterial, it is disbelief in the clergy that makes an atheist."¹³⁰

All that which happened to Tom Paine, his ostracism and defamation in a nation he had served faithfully and brilliantly, was not the result of a tyrannous government. Instead, Thomas Paine was the victim of a tyrannous public opinion, the burden and guilt lying on the people themselves.¹³¹

Dr. Johnson concluded his treatment of Thomas Paine with a challenge to the American conscience that although it is difficult to bear such men who express unpopular opinions, it must be done nevertheless. Many of these individuals are not the lunatics they appear to be, stated the author, some are "Promethean messengers who have stolen Vulcan's fire for the use of mankind."¹³²

In Dr. Johnson's judgment, no individual American souls approve or condone the use of legal or extra-legal means to suppress opinion. Instead, even though the opinions are deadly in our conception, and it is extremely difficult to tolerate them, we must show mercy and forbearance because "it is one of the qualifications of a civilized man."¹³³

The crusading element within Dr. Johnson's treatment is clearly evident and does hamper objectivity in the fullest sense. Nevertheless, the hypothesis that tyrannous public opinion crucified Tom Paine is provocative and challenging.

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CHAPTER V

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THOMAS PAINE IN PERIODICALS

Essays presenting sketches of a biographical vein concerning the life, career and influence of Thomas Paine are relatively plentiful throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Three sources display the variety and abundance of these essays and articles located in American and British periodicals. The Paine scholar can be extremely grateful for the existence of these three bibliographical reference works.

A concise, but beneficial, list is found in Harry H. Clark's "Selected Bibliography" in Representative Selections, the revised edition, 1961. A far more complete listing of sources is located in Richard Gimbel's "Thomas Paine Fights for Freedom in Three Worlds: The New, The Old, The Next."¹ Here Mr. Gimbel offers a complete catalogue of an exhibition commemorating the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of Paine's death. Finally, a recent 1974 effort by Dr. Jerome D. Wilson entitled "Thomas Paine in America: An Annotated Bibliography 1900-1973," contributes to Paine scholarship by offering an even more complete, varied and expanded listing of essays and articles of Paine criticism.²

The following essays to be discussed have been selected because they are illustrative of the common treatment of Tom Paine during their respective time periods. However, they also have something to

contribute such as yielding some new information or a somewhat different interpretation.

In 1843 another basically anti-Paine statement came from the pen of John Alberger in his essay "The Life and Character of Thomas Paine." This published speech, delivered in Philadelphia on the occasion of the one-hundred-sixth anniversary of the birthday of Paine, was circulated in The North American Review in July, 1843.

The fifty-eight page oration was not a vehement commentary but, rather, expressed some sincere pity for Thomas Paine. An objective evaluation was attempted even though the author considered Paine, without question, an infidel of the highest order.

Alberger strove to smooth over violent antipathy toward Thomas Paine because of his Age of Reason. Instead of condemning the man for his obnoxious religious beliefs, Alberger called for a merciful attitude on the part of the reader. The Age of Reason was not to be feared but to teach the Christian "to what dregs infidelity, beginning with refinement and high-bred speculation, will at last come."³

In his concluding statement, the author expressed his pity for Thomas Paine's wasted life. In his estimation, Paine was endowed with all the qualities and abilities "that might have made an impression on the world, and have left a memorable trace behind him. . . ."⁴ Nevertheless, because his love of virtue and truth was not mingled "with a meek and humble sense of the powers with which God has endowed us, and the love of freedom with a decent reverence for authority and example," he died in disgrace with no one to truly mourn his passing.⁵

An invaluable trilogy on Thomas Paine appeared in the Atlantic Monthly during 1859. The first of these three essays authored by F. M. Sheldon was "Thomas Paine's Second Appearance in the United States." In this case, Sheldon endeavored to portray Thomas Paine as a much maligned and misunderstood patriot. Citing contemporary newspapers, Sheldon carefully constructed the circumstances and environment to which Tom Paine returned after spending years abroad in Europe. The Federalist and Anti-Federalist strife of the 1790's became the backdrop for the return of Paine to America and simply hampered his influence to any significant degree. The Age of Reason had made an indelible impression upon the American people and they were in no forgiving mood. In the words of Frederick Sheldon, "In New England, Christianity and Federalism were looked upon as intimately connected, and Democracy as a wicked thing, born of Tom Paine, Tom Jefferson and the Father of Lies."⁶ Poor Tom Paine stood first in this trinity of evil in the eyes of the public. In fact, Robert Treat Paine, a well-known Massachusetts poet and author, legally changed his name from Thomas to Robert because he felt he had no true "Christian" name.⁷

Sheldon applauded Thomas Jefferson's fearlessness in encouraging Paine's return to the United States, even though he knew full well that "the old man was broken, that the fire had gone out of him" and he could be of little use to the party.⁸ President Jefferson's admirable action in extending the invitation to Thomas Paine "was one of the manliest acts" in his life.⁹

Some men came to Thomas Paine's defense, but "the enemy had ten guns to Paine's one, and served them with all the fierceness of

party-hate."¹⁰ According to the author, Tom Paine could not escape being wounded by the furious, constant attacks upon his character and reputation. Ultimately, "the current of American events had swept past him, leaving him stranded, a broken fragment of a revolutionary wreck."¹¹

The essayist proved his objectivity by enumerating those discernible character faults possessed by Mr. Paine. For instance, Paine could not tolerate contradiction. "To differ with him was, in his eyes, simply to be deficient in understanding."¹² In his adoration of reason, he could not tolerate anyone who reasoned with him. This particular intolerance to what Paine considered intolerance in others was not unique, "he was no exception to the rule,--that we find no persons so intolerant and illiberal as men professing liberal principles."¹³

The main emphasis of Frederick Sheldon's first essay was to call for objectivity in the treatment of Thomas Paine. He also emphasized the need for a capable and scholarly biography to show the world what kind of a man he truly was, "the representative man of Democracy in both hemispheres."¹⁴ It is high time for justice to be done for the man and his memory, concluded Sheldon.

The second essay, "Tom Paine's First Appearance in America," in this well-written and documented trilogy, accentuated the importance of the years 1774 to 1787 upon Paine's life. The historical setting depicting contemporary, colonial sympathies and unrest is particularly useful in explaining the causes behind the powerful influence exerted at the time by the publishing of Common Sense and The Crisis Papers. It

was the author's contention that the people became excited with the cries for independence and "like an electrified Leyden jar, only waited for the touch of a skillful hand to produce the explosion."¹⁵ The spark came with Common Sense and opinion throughout the colonies changed in favor of outright independence.

F. M. Sheldon concluded his second essay with a discussion of the Crisis and the significant effects from this inspiring group of appeals to the American people during their time of trial by fire. Finally, the last page was devoted to details concerning Paine's preparation for his forthcoming journey to Europe in 1787.

The third and final essay, "Thomas Paine in England and France," took up the story of Paine's life in Europe from 1787 to 1802. Sheldon followed through, as he had done in the other two articles, with vivid, documented descriptions of the contemporary European political and social climate into which the now famous Thomas Paine entered.

These troubled years that broke Paine physically and emotionally were graphically described by Sheldon. Fresh material was introduced in that the author relied on contemporary accounts from French and British periodicals that had not been previously included in other treatments.¹⁶

F. M. Sheldon's comments about the political treatise Rights of Man were noteworthy. In his estimation, Paine had an extraordinary gift in his ability to write in a popular style for the general public. The author explained his opinion in the following manner:

Paine knew exactly what he wanted to say, and exactly how to say it. His positions may be wrong,--no doubt frequently are wrong,--but so clearly, keenly, and above all so boldly

stated, and backed by such shrewd arguments and such apposed illustrations, that it is difficult not to yield to his common-sense view of the question he is discussing."¹⁷

The effect of Thomas Paine's Rights of Man were significant to those whose minds traveled along the same republican avenues. To the Jacobin radicals, "the Genius of Liberty seemed to be hovering over England; and Thomas Paine was the harbinger to prepare his way."¹⁸

In France, the utopian dream world of the universal republic slowly dissolved into the reality of the Reign of Terror. Thomas Paine was a man behind the times and when he took his stand against the execution of King Louis XVI, he destroyed what little popularity he had left and it almost cost him his own life. "He was already such a laggard behind the revolutionary march, that he did not suspect the determination of the Mountain to put the King to death."¹⁹

F. M. Sheldon purposely emphasized the significant consequences of Paine's prison experiences in the Luxembourg. It was these eleven months of incarceration that destroyed the man and his image. For example, his speaking about himself and his importance had developed to such excess "as to destroy the conversational talents which all his contemporaries who speak of him describe as remarkable."²⁰ His mind, distorted by suffering and left to brooding about the neglect of the American people and their President to come to his aid, was poured out in his "Letter to George Washington." He believed that the entire nation owed their very existence to him. Later, when he returned to America upon the invitation of President Thomas Jefferson, his influence was of no consequence. He was merely a shell of his former self.

The Sheldon trio of essays was an informative and important addition to Paine scholarship. The objectivity and documentation was clearly evident. The vast amount of research that Sheldon was able to accomplish enhanced the treatment as the contemporary issues and attitudes were vibrantly recorded in all three articles. The accounts of Thomas Paine's life and influence are valuable and dispassionate and are certainly a vast improvement over earlier violently partisan biographical studies of the James Cheetham and Gilbert Vale type.

It would be quite difficult not to mention one particular Paine disciple who favored his idol with constant reference and adulation throughout his books and essays. Robert Ingersoll, author, lawyer and lecturer, was perhaps as famous an infidel in the nineteenth century as had been Tom Paine in his age. His background was much like Sir Leslie Stephen and Moncure D. Conway. He had been raised in an orthodox Christian environment, his father being a Congregational minister, but he revolted against his heritage and devoted his life to publicly condemning Christianity and the clergy.

No new information about the life, career and influence of Thomas Paine is to be discovered in Robert Ingersoll's various rhetorical diatribes against the Church. There is also no aim toward objectivity in Ingersoll's three essays about Paine. In each case, Tom Paine seems to be a useful medium through which Ingersoll can declare his anti-Christian position. Some rather interesting comments, however, can be gleaned from his essays on Paine. In his deliberate vindication of Tom Paine and his principles, Ingersoll spent most of his time applauding the Age of Reason and this religious treatise's effectiveness on

nineteenth-century thought. For example, Ingersoll admits that as far as he was concerned Tom Paine's crime was his Age of Reason.²¹ He was not alone for other "criminals" who believed in Paine's creed were "the four greatest statesmen that America has produced," Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Charles Sumner and Abraham Lincoln.²² Not only did Paine make a significant impression upon the philosophies of famous individuals, but he also influenced those liberated sects, the Universalists and the Unitarians, who "have found their best weapons, their best arguments, in the 'Age of Reason.'"²³ Even the "advanced theologians" who spent their time investigating "higher criticism" are substantially repeating the basic principles as set forth in Paine's Age of Reason. Ingersoll added at this point, "They still wear the old uniform--clinging to the toggery of theology--but inside of their religious rage they agree with Thomas Paine."²⁴

In his concluding remarks in the essay, "Thomas Paine," Robert Ingersoll proclaimed his greatest tribute to Paine's memory:

Thomas Paine had the courage, the sense, the heart, to denounce these horrors, the absurdities, these infinite infamies. He did what he could to drive these theological vipers, the Calvinistic cobras, these fanged and hissing serpents of superstition from the heart of man.²⁵

Another contemporary author of Robert Ingersoll's era was E. P. Powell. His essay, "A Study of Thomas Paine," was a vindication of Paine's political and religious views in the light that many other respectable historical figures were in agreement within his basic beliefs.

The essay was eulogistic and biographical in context, but contained meager documentation.²⁶ Mr. Powell proceeded to record those

significant contributions of Thomas Paine to the American Revolution and to mankind in general. He called Paine one of the greatest men of the American Revolutionary period.²⁷ Not only was his greatness confined to American soil, stated Mr. Powell, because "no literary ventures in the history of the world had ever before accomplished so much in the way of positive results, or attained such universal popularity."²⁸

Although the author spent more time applauding Thomas Paine's political philosophy, he did discuss the Age of Reason and what effects were being felt at that particular time in 1893.

The "Age of Reason" grows mild and mellow in the light of controversies which now agitate theology. The higher criticism of professors in the theological seminaries, and leading preachers in all sects, is an arrow's flight ahead of Thomas Paine, in its far-reaching consequences, and not inferior in its manly adhesion to the truth.²⁹

Because of this liberalization occurring in theological circles, it was Powell's prophecy that Tom Paine's infamy would soon be reversed and his name "honorably listed in some future American statesmen series, as constituting with Franklin and Washington a triumvirate that created the independence of the United States. . . ."³⁰

The famous statement by Theodore Roosevelt which called Thomas Paine "a filthy little atheist" produced several responses on Paine's behalf in both American and British periodicals. On one occasion, two replies were published, a week apart, in the London periodical, The Nation, in May, 1909. The first reply, "To the memory of Thomas Paine," was anonymously authored. In answer to Roosevelt's remark, the author proceeded to write a highly laudatory justification of Thomas Paine's contributions to American and British political and religious

liberty. A week following this vindication, Joseph Clayton wrote in the "Letters to the Editor" section his own letter in reply to "To the Memory of Thomas Paine." Clayton quickly praised the editor's enclosure of such a fine tribute to Tom Paine. In rather graphic language, he added, "Only an ex-President of the United States or an English bishop would be stupid enough to-day to call Paine 'an atheist. . . .'"³¹

Clayton included a quotation from the American philosopher-poet, Walt Whitman, to bolster the premise that the United States owed Tom Paine a debt of gratitude for his magnificent service during the Revolution. In fact, Clayton continued, Thomas Paine "was the real author of the Declaration of Independence."³² This statement by Joseph Clayton, based on the earlier claim made by William Cobbett, was pursued to its natural conclusion in a 1947 biographical, uncritical tirade, Thomas Paine: Author of the Declaration of Independence, by American freethinker Joseph Lewis.³³

Several years later, The Nation included another response to Theodore Roosevelt's condemnation of Tom Paine. Elbridge Colby reprinted two admiring letters from a Thomas Hardy, who was at that time Secretary of the London Corresponding Society, written to Thomas Paine in 1807. The only assertion of any interest made by Mr. Colby in this latest vindication of Paine's memory was to the effect that had Paine been in London during his last years instead of America, "he might have avoided the pious mobs who hissed him out of Trenton and the disgusting, imp-adorned caricatures of himself" that were placed on many handy and conspicuous fences.³⁴

In April, 1920, James A. Roberts wrote an essay, "Thomas Paine," which appeared in the Quarterly Journal of the New York State Historical Association. This essay was a sympathetic, partisan reaffirmation of Moncure Conway's thesis concerning the monumental influence of Quakerism upon Thomas Paine.

One interesting comment made by Mr. Roberts regarded Thomas Paine's father and his type of Quakerism.

His father was a Quaker of the early type, one who distrusted revelation in the form of the direct communication of God's will to man as it is set forth in the Scriptures, and who relied rather upon the wonders of creation and upon the inner light. A part of Paine's unpopularity in his last years was due to his devotion to the religion of his father.³⁵

Eight pages later, Roberts made the declaration that Paine's father "was a deist."³⁶ In this case, he attributed Joseph Paine's deism to his belief in the "inner light," and his disbelief in Christ's divinity and Biblical revelation.³⁷ No evidence is recorded to support his hypothesis and, in this instance, in the estimation of Harry Hayden Clark, James A. Roberts "out-Conways Conway."³⁸

As for the disgusting treatment of Thomas Paine during his last years in America, the author attributed the basic causes to his not being in accord with the majority in their political and religious opinions. Today, however, he should not remain a martyr for his beliefs, Roberts maintained, because his teaching in the Age of Reason is now fully acceptable even by the intelligent evangelical.³⁹

Another essay which emphasized the Age of Reason as a major cause of Tom Paine's ostracism in America during those last years of

his life, was Henry Leffmann's, "The Real Thomas Paine, Patriot and Publicist: A Philosopher Misunderstood." He maintained that Thomas Paine's motive in writing his famous religious treatise was of the highest order in that he, like many others, endeavored "to substitute an age of reason for an age of faith."⁴⁰ However, in his attempt to restore freedom of religious expression, his own intolerance toward the Bible as divinely inspired revelation cancels "all claims to his being a liberal in religion and show him to be a bigot. . . ."⁴¹ This, he continued, simply showed him to be no different from any other human being.

The Age of Reason, according to the author, was responsible for Paine's being misunderstood and maligned. Even though it was not unique in condemning the literal interpretation of the Bible, when the book reached the general public it became "much more effective in arousing both approval and condemnation. . . ."⁴² A mistake of major magnitude made by Thomas Paine, according to Leffmann, was his inability to see that men who "try to dismiss dogma and creeds from the midst of society and base their religion upon an interpretation of nature will fail, for 'religion is a social phenomenon. . . .'"⁴³ A society will not sit by while those expressions it treasures are trampled upon, these are "sacred things."⁴⁴

Henry Leffmann further explained that Thomas Paine's irreligion led to the unjustified charges of immorality and drunkenness and, strangely enough, "Paine did not pass beyond the limits which modern ecclesiastics are going and who yet retain their positions in the church."⁴⁵

The author concluded that Thoams Paine was indeed a patriot, a man who did much for the American cause to secure independence and promote the federalization of the states. It was a sad fact that all his contributions were discarded because of the violent reactions to his Age of Reason, which was written with the purest motive and intense human sympathy. The author stated in summary that one book should not erase all the good that a man has done for his country, for Thomas Paine truly "deserves to be remembered with approval by all Americans."⁴⁶

Gamaliel Bradford's "Damaged Souls" was an extremely well-written and absorbing attempt to portray Thomas Paine, the radical. The essay, published in Harper's Magazine, was a condensation of the Paine character sketch or "psychograph" in his book entitled Damaged Souls.

As a psychographer, Bradford endeavored to extract from the many actions of this man's life and circumstances those characteristics which are vital and permanent and display definite patterns of behavior.

In Damaged Souls, Thomas Paine was analyzed as a radical with a psychosis, "a screw loose." As a radical, Paine "delighted in change, delighted in novelty, believed the old order doomed and that he and his like could make the world over and better."⁴⁷ Above all, declared Bradford, Thomas Paine was a rebel for "he had no awe, no reverence, and he did like to pull down, cut up, and tear to pieces."⁴⁸

The Age of Reason did not define Paine an unbeliever, contended the author, but instead it must be recognized that the true rebel is

always a believer, never a skeptic like the conservative "who is afraid to lift his own foot."⁴⁹ Bradford continued, stating that Thomas Paine was a believer who had faith in man, man's honesty, man's future, the rights of man, and above all, "he performed the superb logical feat of believing in Thomas Paine."⁵⁰ Thus, he could hardly be called a skeptic.

The author did not spend much time in discussing those non-rebel traits in Tom Paine, even though he looked for them. He stated that the nonradical traits such as the longing for quiet, tranquility and domestic peace are rather insignificant when analyzing the total man.

The essay did not condemn Paine and his talent. Gamaliel Bradford was quick to applaud those obvious marks of talent and creativity within his writings.

Concerning those attacks on Tom Paine by his enemies, the disgusting slander that followed him wherever he traveled, Gamaliel Bradford condemned as sheer childishness. The exposure of his drinking habits, his slovenly dress and disregard for primary comforts were, in the author's words, only "serious objections to a housemate."⁵¹ In Paine's defense Bradford made the following declaration:

Here is a man who upset the world, and you say he did not brush his clothes. Here is a man who beat and shook conventions, who stirred up dusty and old titles till he showed their rotten vanity, and you complain because some of the dust got on himself. This is childishness.⁵²

Regarding his intellect, Thomas Paine was not an elaborately logical and systematic thinker. Instead, according to the author, "his

intelligence was rather keen, alert, shrewd, attentive to the surfaces of things and darting rather than delving into the hidden places."⁵³ Although Paine did not possess a "deep mind," he had a genuine gift of words. Indeed, he was a true master of words, contended Bradford.⁵⁴

In the final two paragraphs of his essay, Gamaliel Bradford endeavored to place Tom Paine in a positive light. He recognized that Paine, like most rebels, had performed acts that had harmed mankind, but regardless of that fact, we are indebted to him because he also accomplished a great deal of good. Perhaps his greatest gift to the world was that he taught men to think, to value individual liberty and to be free to exhibit human compassion.⁵⁵ This debt was not one that could be easily paid, the author concluded.

One of the most extremely biased treatments of the anti-Paine type came out in Catholic World in April, 1925. This essay had been one of a series of lectures entitled "Champions of Unbelief" delivered by James M. Gillis. The Catholic point of view is especially forceful in this case.⁵⁶ Those negative characteristics of Tom Paine such as his being "offensively cocksure, violently intolerant, and unfair in controversy" are brought out by the author. Indeed, Gillis analyzes his subject and condemns him as a poor sport, a fanatic and a man totally ignorant of human nature.⁵⁷

Gillis spent an appropriate amount of time discussing fundamental errors and misconceptions in Paine's Biblical criticism. This was the most interesting and informative part of the essay. It was the

author's contention that even though one is forbidden to resent insult against oneself, "there is no law against resenting an insult to God."⁵⁸ And although the Scripture verse, "they know not what they do," might be applied to Tomas Paine and his Age of Reason, "but they who know not what they do, ought not to write books--at least they ought not to write books of Biblical criticism."⁵⁹

James Gillis concluded his study of Tom Paine with the statement that America would still be a colonial possession of England had the people not supported his political views. However, "fortunately, the American people who trusted Paine's political views, rejected his theological views." Therefore, "in consequence, with our freedom and liberty, we still have our Christianity."⁶⁰

The Gillis treatment is discerningly opinionated but, in the opinion of one Paine scholar and fellow Catholic, Dr. Domenic Elder, the study "is valuable as a fair and balanced critique of Paine's character and works."⁶¹ Harry H. Clark considered the Gillis study a cogent criticism and "stimulating" reading.⁶²

Another essay, basically biographical but with many comments on Thomas Paine's religious and political philosophy, was published in the London periodical, The Spectator, on January 29, 1937. The author, R. C. K. Ensor, attempted to evaluate Tom Paine in the light of twentieth-century thought. In his opinion, Tom Paine's Age of Reason was the least important of his writings because of its innate impermanence. The old Bible-smashing technique and deist position is simply too "far removed from the educated thought of the world today."⁶³

Taking into consideration the background of Thomas Paine, Ensor attempted to comprehend the reasons for his anti-English sentiments so clearly expressed in his Rights of Man. That he had a significant influence upon American and English political opinion cannot be denied, concluded the author. Nevertheless, Paine's thinking as presented in his writings was not original. He was not a Rousseau or a Bentham. "His mind moved lightly and hastily, and its merely intellectual quality was shallow."⁶⁴ For all the looseness and naïveté, his mind often produced "flashes of insight and foresight."⁶⁵ His homely appeal to ordinary folk greatly enhanced his writing and few have surpassed the effectiveness of his style.

This short, undocumented, two-page treatment is relatively important, one critic maintains, because it seems to be indicative of a rather common British attitude toward the works of Thomas Paine during the early decades of the twentieth century.⁶⁶

In 1942, the renowned American historian R. R. Palmer wrote an essay, "Tom Paine: Victim of the Rights of Man," for the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography. In this essay, Dr. Palmer attempted to analyze Paine as a product of the eighteenth century.

Agreeing with many contemporary critics, Dr. Palmer does not consider Thomas Paine an original thinker. As Palmer described it, "His ideas were not new, nor was his mind creative."⁶⁷ He was more a maker of phrases than a fashioner of thought. If it can be claimed that he had genius, it was a genius of another kind, for he had the ability to relate the thoughts of the philosophers to the plain, common man.⁶⁸

To bolster his thesis that Tom Paine was in a way "the least original, but the most typical, of the school he represents," Palmer contrasted Paine with Jean Jacques Rousseau.⁶⁹ The most interesting comment to develop from this comparison and contrast study between these famous individuals evolved around Paine's "Puritanism." Dr. Palmer declared that Tom Paine remained a Puritan long after he rejected the Christian faith. His ability to accept a rather plain and austere life was in marked contrast to Rousseau. If it can be said that Paine lacked the creative genius of Rousseau, "he lacked also his persecution complex and, if he lacked Rousseau's depth of insight, he lacked also his pathological absorption in himself."⁷⁰ By this statement Palmer is in marked contrast to those biographers and critics who emphasize Thomas Paine's persecution complex and insatiable pride as being so much a part of his personality after his sojourn in the Luxembourg Prison.

While considering Thomas Paine's religious philosophy, Dr. Palmer used another comparison-contrast vehicle. On this occasion he paralleled the thoughts of Paine and Voltaire. Where Voltaire condemned Christianity as ridiculous superstition, Paine declared it wicked. Where Voltaire used satire and jests, Paine was "desperately in earnest."⁷¹

As to the reasons why the Age of Reason condemned Tom Paine to infamy and ostracism, Dr. Palmer explained that it "exposed to common view ideas familiar to the upper classes for more than a generation."⁷² This sacrilege could not be condoned or soon forgotten by the respectable element of the society.

The sad fact remained, stated Dr. Palmer, that after the unleashing of terror, persecution and war which plagued the closing decade of the eighteenth century and caused both conservatives and radicals to revise their ideologies, Thomas Paine was too old and stubborn to change. He would not bend with the reaction, and it ruined his reputation.⁷³ At the end of his life he "was hardly a hero except to the lunatic fringe."⁷⁴ He was an eighteenth-century man who had outlived his age and his dreams.

Also in 1942, another essay concerning the life and reputation of Thomas Paine was published in the Virginia Quarterly Review. The author, Dixon Wecter, had, two years before, written an article pertaining to some personal correspondence between Tom Paine and Benjamin Franklin. The essay attempted to analyze some fundamental differences between these two famous revolutionary spirits. Notably, three newly discovered letters between Paine and Franklin were included in the text as well as some other correspondence of interest.⁷⁵

Mr. Wecter, in his latter effort, endeavored to define the anti-hero rationale as it applied to the reputation of Tom Paine. The author's aim was "to trace the curve of Paine's reputation . . . to learn something about hero-worship in reverse."⁷⁶ Wecter's thesis was that hero-worship "gathers most readily about the magnetic poles of adoration and hate; one is a necessary complement to the other."⁷⁷ If, continued the author, a prominent individual cannot be identified with the major aims of those who form public opinion, then he may well be "pilloried in the market place."⁷⁸ Folk imagination will naturally

label its outstanding historical figures as either wholly good or evil, and the legend continues to expand even after death. Thus, Wecter explained, if a man is accepted by the masses as a hero, "all his faults are forgotten; but if he proves unacceptable, he becomes a villain, and whatever services he rendered are cancelled out."⁷⁹

The remainder of the essay was developed around illustrating the anti-hero principle at work, using Paine's reputation as a vehicle traced down through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Mr. Wecter asserted that Tom Paine was America's best example of a "hero manqué."⁸⁰ Although he had made significant contributions to the American cause, he became the singularly most hated man in America, "a bogey of pulpit and nursery."⁸¹

The most interesting comments made by the author in an attempt to locate some of the reasons for Paine's vilification concern the unjust condemnation of his deism. In Dixon Wecter's opinion, many other prominent American leaders had similar beliefs yet they are revered in American history. The author concluded that the real problem may have been presented in Tom Paine's economic philosophy. They hated his economics and his deism too. Therefore, the "Federalists and their heirs planted a fear of him in the ranks of homespun piety for reasons that were disingenuous."⁸²

The author reluctantly summarized that because Tom Paine is so far removed in time and his pattern of life, "a less vivid parallel in 1942," it is perhaps too late for him to "gain his true stature as an American hero and liberal."⁸³

The Wecter treatment is an interesting study of the development of Paine's anti-hero image, and useful in that it gives a rather complete representation of how his reputation suffered assault and indignity over the years.

An extremely methodical study on one incident during Tom Paine's last years in America was published by the Thomas Paine Historical Association of New Rochelle in 1946. This particular incident which, it is said, nearly broke old Paine's heart, concerned his not being allowed to vote in the election of 1806 in New Rochelle on the grounds that he was not an American citizen at the time.

Thomas D. Scoble, Jr., lawyer and expert on common law, was called upon by the Paine Historical Association to assemble and analyze the facts in regard to this episode.

In the essay, which reads like a legal brief, Mr. Scoble listed the eight main reasons, or classifications of factors, for Tom Paine's being denied his privilege to vote. After enumerating the reasons, the author proceeded to attack the assorted claims one at a time and destroy their validity. In each case legal precedents were used to prove that Paine's American citizenship was never really in question. There was no Congressional Act forfeiting his citizenship, or a court record in which Paine's citizenship and rights were adjudicated, Scoble declared. The challenge by the Inspector of Elections of New Rochelle, Elisha Ward, on the grounds that Gouverneur Morris had failed to claim him as a citizen during his incarceration in a French prison was declared to be false in fact and without any

legal basis.⁸⁴ The logical conclusion, submitted by Scoble, was that from all the established facts and applicable laws Paine "became an American citizen at the time of the Declaration of Independence and retained that citizenship until his death."⁸⁵

The main importance for the consideration of this particular study is that it is another example, precise and methodically researched, of an effort to defend the name and reputation of Thomas Paine.

Donald Connolly, C.S.P., wrote an article for the American Catholic Historical Society that clearly illustrates that violent anti-Paine sentiment was not totally dead. The bulk of the essay by the Reverend Connolly was devoted to a reprinting of the Bishop Benedict Fenwick letter concerning his recollections of being called to Thomas Paine's sick room shortly before his death.

The Reverend Connolly quickly initiated his opinion of Paine in the third paragraph of his essay. It was his belief that the average American knew only one side of Tom Paine, that of the fiery patriot and author of Common Sense and Crisis. However, according to Connolly, there was another side to the man, the side so well known to American historians, as the "unkempt, boorish, and nearly atheistic radical."⁸⁶ This was the true Paine, a man who "nurtured the bitterness of a small man with too high pretensions," who fully deserved his ostracism and infamy.⁸⁷

Asking the question, did Tom Paine die "as atheist or Christian, in turmoil or in final peace," Connolly turned to reprint a young

priest's account of Paine's final hours written in a letter to his brother years after the encounter had taken place.⁸⁸ The two priests, one being Benedict Fenwick, who later became the Bishop of Boston, vividly pictured Tom Paine as a demonically possessed monster who continually blasphemed the name of Jesus Christ. After being ordered to leave the room by Paine himself, Father Fenwick wrote, "Upon this we withdrew both from the room, and left the unfortunate man to his own thoughts. I never, before or since, beheld a more hardened wretch."⁸⁹

This essay most certainly exemplifies that anti-Paine sympathy had not completely disappeared in theological circles. In addition to this revelation, it assuredly destroyed any remnants of the death-bed recantation myth.

Of the four most prolific authors in the field of Paine scholarship (Alfred Owen Aldridge, Harry H. Clark, Richard Gimbel and Frank Smith), Colonel Richard Gimbel and his significant contributions must not be overlooked. Colonel Gimbel wrote several essays that were published in major American academic periodicals. His article, "New Political Writings by Thomas Paine," reprinted a number of letters which illustrated that, although Paine frequently commented that he had no political party ties, he played a minor role in the effort made to secure a republican constitution for the state of Connecticut.⁹⁰

A second essay entitled, "The Resurgence of Thomas Paine," attempted to summarize those major events in his career with the conclusion that, although Paine "committed political suicide," modern generations are beginning to view him in an objective manner with much of

the personal slander about him being allowed to gradually disappear. Therefore a resurgence of interest in Tom Paine as a major role player in American history is developing.⁹¹

The singularly most significant contribution of Richard Gimbel to Paine scholarship was his cataloguing the materials in his private collection of "Paineiana" at Yale University.⁹² During his lifetime Gimbel had collected everything he could find, published or unpublished materials by or concerning Thomas Paine. The collection has recently been moved from Yale to the American Philosophical Society Headquarters in Philadelphia. A final, up-to-date catalogue is in preparation, which, after completion, will mean easy accessibility in one locale of an immense amount of data and memorabilia on Thomas Paine. Therefore, every edition of Paine's works, every biography of him, xeroxed and microfilmed copies of materials from British and French archives, will be available to the student of Tom Paine to study and digest at leisure.⁹³ This unquestionably will be a great boon to the field, and will doubtless result in even more scholarly and informative treatments on the subject of Thomas Paine in the future.

In 1962, Michael L. Lasser wrote an interesting essay entitled, "Thomas Paine and Robert Treat Paine: A Case of Mistaken Identity." Lasser, an English instructor at Rutgers Preparatory School in New Brunswick, attempted to prove that a patriotic song, "Adams and Liberty," or also known as "The Boston Patriotic Song," was not authored by Thomas Paine. The work had been attributed to Tom Paine's pen and included in two editions of his complete works, the Moncure D. Conway and Daniel E. Wheeler compilations.

The true composer of the song was Robert Treat Paine, a prominent Massachusetts Federalist and son of one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.⁹⁴

Robert Treat Paine, Jr., had legally taken his father's name in 1801. He had been born Thomas, but, because of the notoriety associated with the name Thomas Paine, and out of respect for his deceased elder brother, he had his name changed so he might have a "Christian" name.⁹⁵

The original mistake concerning the authorship was made by Thomas Clio Rickman in his 1819 biography of Thomas Paine. Unfortunately, compiler Moncure Conway repeated the error and it went uncontested for many years.

Lasser clearly brings out the obvious when the poem criticizes the French Revolution and lauds the person of John Adams. In his opinion these two facts make it almost impossible to even consider Thomas Paine as the author.

No biographer besides Clio Rickman mentions the song and the compilers, excluding Conway and Wheeler, do not include it in their editions of Paine's complete works. Since musicologists have accurately recorded the author to be Robert Treat Paine, Jr., "it remains only for readers and students of Thomas Paine to note the necessary adjustment of his bibliography."⁹⁶

The Lasser treatment completes the enumeration and description of those articles and essays that can be regarded basically biographical in content.

These studies, resembling the major biographies and numerous biographical sketches, exhibit the same great variety in their interest and interpretation of Thomas Paine's character, influence and role in American and British history. Consequently, no two writers seem to view Paine in exactly the same light.

An overall observation does reveal that the extreme anti-Paine treatments are becoming fewer in number and that the majority of the studies call for the necessity of a more objective reassessment of Thomas Paine's many contributions to political, intellectual and religious thought.

NOTES

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³ John Alberger, "The Life and Character of Thomas Paine," The North American Review, 57 (July, 1843), 50.

⁴ Ibid., p. 58.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ F. M. Sheldon, "Thomas Paine's Second Appearance in the United States," Atlantic Monthly, 4 (July, 1859), 9.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 11.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 13.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁵ F. M. Sheldon, "Tom Paine's First Appearance in America," Atlantic Monthly, 4 (November, 1859), 568.

¹⁶ Clark, p. cxxxiii.

¹⁷ F. M. Sheldon, "Thomas Paine in England and France," Atlantic Monthly, 4 (December, 1859), 694.

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- 87 Ibid.
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90 Richard Gimbel, "New Political Writings by Thomas Paine," Yale University Literary Gazette, 30 (January, 1956), 94-107.

91 Richard Gimbel, "The Resurgence of Thomas Paine," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 69 (October, 1958), 97-111.

92 Richard Gimbel, "Thomas Paine Fights for Freedom in Three Worlds: The New, The Old, The Next," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 70 (1960), 397-492.

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CHAPTER VI

THOMAS PAINE AS VIEWED BY HISTORIANS

A statement was made by Donald Connolly in his essay, "The Death of Thomas Paine," that the average American had acquired a one-sided viewpoint of Thomas Paine. They saw him as the great Revolutionary patriot and author of Common Sense and the Crisis. The true Paine, according to Connolly, was well known to American historians who recognized him as the "unkempt, boorish, and nearly atheistic radical," who deserved ostracism and infamy.¹ Unfortunately, the Reverend Connolly did not mention the names of those historians he used as sources for his thesis.

After examining what many early American and British historians had to say about Thomas Paine in their respective textbooks concerning the Revolution and early years of the American Republic, it becomes exceedingly difficult to concur with the Connolly statement. For example, the nineteenth-century American historian-statesman George Bancroft in his History of the United States did not cast aspersion upon the memory of Thomas Paine. Instead, the remarks made about Paine and his pamphlet, Common Sense, were positive and impersonal. Paine is portrayed as a newly arrived immigrant who in less than a year's time "had cultivated the society of Franklin, Rittenhouse, Clymer, and Samuel Adams. . . ." ² The pamphlet, Common Sense, soon found itself in everyone's hands, declared Dr. Bancroft, and being written outside the influence of the friends of proprietary government, "its doctrines

threatened their overthrow."³ Except for these few references to Tom Paine and Common Sense, George Bancroft did not discuss the man or his influence any further. What little he said of Paine was impersonal and concisely expressed, having made no remarks concerning his character or reputation.

John Fiske, another early American philosopher, scientist, historian and popularizer of the Bancroft era, described Thomas Paine as "by nature a dissenter and a revolutionist to the marrow of his bones."⁴ Fiske, himself holding unorthodox religious convictions and being an avid spokesman for the evolutionary ideas of Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin, continued his assessment of Paine by making the following remarks:

Full of the generous though often blind enthusiasm of the eighteenth century for the "rights of man," he was no respecter of the established order, whether in church or state. To him, the church and its doctrines meant slavish superstition, and the state meant tyranny.⁵

As to Tom Paine's power of expressing himself through his writing, John Fiske judged him as having a "crude and undisciplined mind, and quite devoid of scholarship. . . ." Yet, Fiske continued, he was "endowed with native acuteness and sagacity, and with no mean power of expressing himself, Paine succeeded in making everyone read what he wrote. . . ."⁶ However, the historian concluded, although Tom Paine achieved a popular reputation through his writing, it was "out of all proportion to his real merit."⁷

The Age of Reason, explained Fiske, was the main cause for Paine's adulation by contemporary freethinkers and his infamy in the eyes of devout American families.⁸ If one studies this religious treatise, Fiske contends, he finds "some sound and sensible criticism,

such as is often far exceeded in boldness in the books and sermons of Unitarian and Episcopalian divines of the present day. . . ." Furthermore, Fiske continues, "but its tone is coarse and dull, and with the improvement of popular education it is fast sinking into complete and deserved oblivion."⁹

The last remarks made about Thomas Paine by the author concerned the effect of the pamphlet, Common Sense, upon the American colonies during the American Revolution. This pamphlet could not be printed fast enough to meet the demand and "it carried conviction wherever it went."¹⁰ In this case, concluded Fiske, such a caustic pamphleteer as Tom Paine had his role in American history for he helped bring about results "which are not so easily achieved by men of finer mould and more subtle intelligence."¹¹

Even though John Fiske expressed some genuine reservation about Paine's literary talent and reputation as a creative thinker, he certainly did not portray his subject in an entirely negative light for Paine's usefulness as a pamphleteer and propagandist was also stressed.

Another prolific writer of American history during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, John Bach McMaster, had his own thoughts concerning Thomas Paine and his contributions to the American Revolution. In his classic eight-volume study, A History of the People of the United States, McMaster devoted five pages to a discussion of Paine's character and reputation. McMaster labeled Paine an infidel with a name as odious as Benedict Arnold.¹² Like John Fiske, McMaster agreed that Paine's Age of Reason was the major cause of his

infamy and ostracism. However, the author stated, that regardless of his being an infidel, "he was one of the most remarkable men of his time."¹³ Thomas Paine, an enigma full of paradox and contradiction, was vividly described by McMaster in the following statement:

It would be a difficult matter to find anywhere such a compound of baseness and nobleness, of goodness and badness, of greatness and littleness; of so powerful a mind left unbalanced, and led astray by the worst of animal passions.¹⁴

John McMaster does not condone those obvious character faults in Tom Paine. He carefully noted that the "contrast between the man and his work is indeed great."¹⁵ Using James Cheetham's biography as his principal source, McMaster related details concerning the personal habits of Paine, such as his constant drunkenness and unkempt and unwashed appearance during those last years of his life. Nevertheless, the author continued, "this man undertook and accomplished a work as important and as necessary to the success of the Revolution as any of the victories won by the skill of Washington or Gates."¹⁶

A biographical sketch was included in this concise evaluation of a man and his contributions to the American Revolution. Again the James Cheetham treatment finds restatement, but those invaluable works, the pamphlets Common Sense and Crisis are praised by McMaster. Indeed, "'Common Sense' did for the revolution what the 'Federalist' did for the Constitution," proclaimed the author.¹⁷ The effect of Crisis was also immediate and army "desertion ceased, the depleted ranks filled up, men became more hopeful than ever."¹⁸

John McMaster concluded that in Paine's case the man and his works showed a marked contrast and, regardless of his appearance, bad

habits or even his unbelief in Christianity, his role in defending the American cause was significant and must not be overlooked and cast aside.

The Harvard history professor, Edward Channing, in his six-volume masterpiece, A History of the United States, devoted a few comments to Thomas Paine and his Common Sense. Paine was described as one of those literary spirits "whose birthright is the faculty of influencing their fellow men in writing and in print."¹⁹ As to Common Sense, Dr. Channing stated that it would hardly appeal to a modern professor of rhetoric, "but it was admirably fitted to convince ordinary Americans, which a more polished performance might not have done."²⁰ In fact, the author concluded, it must be accepted that Common Sense had a powerful effect on public opinion, for General George Washington, himself, testified as to the change Common Sense worked in the minds of many men in Virginia; "it unquestionably converted thousands to the necessity of separation" from Great Britain.²¹

No comments concerning Tom Paine's character and contemptible reputation are found in Dr. Channing's History. He merely records Paine's important role as an innovator of public opinion to the realization of the necessity of a complete severance from British political and economic domination.

A contemporary liberal-minded Whig historian, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, produced a four-volume work on the American Revolution. This British historian, like George Bancroft, possessed the ability to slash his way through hopeless complexity and arrive at the heart

of the matter.²² He made several annotations about Thomas Paine. In a concise review of Paine's role in the American Revolution, Sir George praised Common Sense as being a powerful vehicle for the changing of opinion toward complete separation from England. The amazing talent of Tom Paine was that "he saw beyond precedents and statutes, and constitutional facts or fictions, into the depths of human nature; and he knew that, if men are to fight to the death, it must be for reasons, which all can understand."²³ Thomas Paine's Common Sense fulfilled that purpose, declared Trevelyan, and its effects were instantaneous, extensive and enduring.

It flew through numberless editions. It was pirated, and parodied, and imitated, and translated into the language of every country where the new Republic had well-wishers, and could hope to procure allies.²⁴

Not a single disparaging remark about Tom Paine is to be found in Trevelyan's study. However, it must be taken into account that his treatment, which helped cement better Anglo-American relations, stressed the virtues of the dedicated American leaders in marked contrast to the dark, tyrannous George III and his cohorts.

The twentieth-century American historians, like their predecessors, generally exhibited an objective, scholarly attitude toward Thomas Paine, his life, career and influence. Dr. Charles A. Beard, a man born in the late nineteenth century, had as his main concern the development of a socioeconomic interpretation of American history. In his estimation, Thomas Paine's Common Sense was a major factor in the call for revolution and separatism. It was through the powerful message proclaimed in this particular pamphlet that "the word 'independence'

had now been spoken and was echoing from New Hampshire to Georgia."²⁵ Paine had assured the colonies that reconciliation was impossible in that the debate over treasured lost rights and liberties as Englishmen became "a war of ideas which could not be stopped."²⁶ Thus Paine, through his Common Sense, sparked the call for independence which swept through the colonies.

A fellow Progressive historian, Vernon L. Parrington, in his excellent study, The Colonial Mind 1620-1800, devoted eleven pages to a discussion of Thomas Paine.

Professor Parrington spent the greater portion of his time considering the role Paine played as a social and economic reformer. In his opinion the effect of Common Sense and the startling change of attitude promoted by this intensely emotional and popular pamphlet was not to be underestimated.

After the appearance of Common Sense, middle and lower class Americans shed their colonial loyalties like last year's garment, and thenceforth they regarded the pretensions of kings as little better than flummery. King George's disgraced exciseman had his own revenge; he had thrust his royal master out of the colonial affection and destroyed the monarchical principle in America.²⁷

This pursuit of the republican principle and assault on the British constitution engaged Tom Paine's attention for most of the rest of his life. The pamphlet, Common Sense, according to Professor Parrington, was a pronouncement of this new philosophy of republicanism and was truly a notable contribution to the cause of political liberalism.²⁸

The maturest elaboration of Thomas Paine's political thought is found in the Rights of Man explained Parrington. He called this

political treatise "the most influential contribution to the revolutionary movement. . . ."29.

One of the most interesting concepts that Professor Parrington brings out in his discussion of Paine's major contributions in the area of political, social and economic reform was that he was an original thinker. Parrington stated that Paine "was very much more than an echo; he possessed that rarest of gifts, an original mind. He looked at the world through no eyes than his own."³⁰ His originality, enhanced by clarity and directness in expression, made his writing appeal to the masses. Indeed, the author concluded, "he was probably the greatest pamphleteer that the English race has produced, and one of its greatest idealists."³¹ This mark of originality and creative thinking is in noticeable contrast to the opinions of such critics and Paine scholars as Alfred O. Aldridge and Harry H. Clark.

The last two pages of Professor Parrington's discussion of Tom Paine was devoted to an analysis of his Age of Reason and its effects upon his reputation. In his estimation, the ministers surpassed the Federalists in their hostility toward Paine, the infidel. The mistake made by Paine was his "underestimating the defensive strength of vested interests, and their skill in arousing the mob prejudice."³² This hatred and ostracism "was a strange reward for a life spent in the service of mankind," concluded Professor Parrington.³³

Vernon L. Parrington has nothing but praise for Tom Paine. The ideals expressed by Paine's writings on the necessity of social, political and economic reform are undoubtedly in line with Parrington's own

philosophy so, perhaps, some objectivity is lost in the process of evaluating the influence of this eighteenth-century patriot. In any case, one fact is clearly discernible: Parrington does not fit into the Reverend Connolly's pattern of an American historian who recognized Thomas Paine as an "unkempt, boorish, and nearly atheistic radical" who richly deserved ostracism and infamy.³⁴

Two professors, John C. Miller of Stanford University and Bernard Bailyn of Harvard, published interpretative studies on the subject of the origins of the American Revolution. The earlier study, first published in 1943 by Dr. Miller, includes a number of remarks about Thomas Paine and the tremendous effect of his political pamphlet, Common Sense, upon American colonial public opinion.

Dr. Miller insists that after the publication of Common Sense in January, 1776, the hottest blasts of patriotic propaganda were now directed against King George III. Before this time, the King had been revered as the best of all possible monarchs. Through Paine's tract, he was now portrayed as "the evil genius of the British Empire."³⁵ Common Sense discredited the doctrine of ministerial responsibility which had been saving the King's face in colonial opinion. Now, the King was the "Royal Criminal" and could no longer remain hidden behind his ministry. Miller continued to explain that George III, instead of being a monarch of imperial vision with the qualities of leadership and diplomatic finesse, was a spokesman of the lesser squirearchy whose policy "never arose above the level of the country gentlemen of England."³⁶ Had King George possessed real vision and risen above

British public opinion and prejudice, he might have saved the Empire, stated Dr. Miller.³⁷ Instead, he lost the American colonies "not so much because he was a tyrant as because his outlook was that of the great majority of his subjects: narrow, insular, and contemptuous of 'colonists.'"³⁸

Thomas Paine, through Common Sense, accomplished more than merely toppling the grandiose reputation of King George, for he ripped away the façade of monarchy itself. He laid bare this form of government by pronouncing it to be "condemned by the Almighty and by right reason."³⁹ The abuses and deficiencies of monarchy were uncovered in order to persuade the colonies of the sheer necessity of complete separation from Great Britain. Common Sense accomplished its goal and rallied the public behind the cry for independence.⁴⁰

Dr. Miller contended that Americans had been prepared for Common Sense and its message because of the steady progress of reaction that had been taking place in Europe.⁴¹ It seemed very likely that a conspiracy was afoot to snuff out liberty wherever it existed. "The extinction of liberty in Europe taught Americans that tyranny, if it were to be thwarted, must be resisted in its beginnings," Miller explained.⁴² The American continent seemed to be, in the minds of the colonists, the last fortress of liberty in a world of triumphant despotism and oppression.⁴³

Thus, as Dr. Miller concluded, Common Sense "showed the radicals that they might rush in where Tom Paine had not feared to tread."⁴⁴ Fortified with a fearless and crusading spirit, American eyes were now

open to the "unpleasant reality that they must choose between slavery and independence."⁴⁵ In this way, through the publishing of Common Sense, Thomas Paine made his significant contribution to American history.

Professor Bernard Bailyn in his 1956 study, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, also commented about Paine and his pamphlet, Common Sense, and its importance to the colonial cause. It was his thesis that only three pamphleteers, James Otis, Thomas Paine and John Allen, possessed anything like the direct, concentrated fury of Jonathan Swift's thought and imagination. Thomas Paine's rage as evidenced in his Common Sense was described in this way by Dr. Bailyn:

The "daring impudence," the "uncommon frenzy" which gave Common Sense its unique power, Paine brought with him from England in 1774; it had been nourished in another culture, and was recognized at the time to be an alien quality in American writing.⁴⁶

Continuing his discussion of Paine's political polemic, Dr. Bailyn emphasized that the intellectual core of Common Sense "was its attack on the traditional conception of balance as a prerequisite for liberty."⁴⁷ He continued by remarking that the English constitution, in reality, was so complicated that its evils were difficult to diagnose. Thomas Paine had perceived this fact but was adamant in his preaching that two evils, monarchical tyranny and aristocratic tyranny, lay at its base.⁴⁸

Without doubt this "superbly rhetorical and iconoclastic pamphlet" made its mark by a slashing attack at the one remaining link between the colonies and the mother country--the English monarchy.

This personal assault against King George and upon the concept of balance in the English constitution caused an immediate sensation.⁴⁹

Professor Bailyn called Thomas Paine, with the exception of Karl Marx, perhaps the most persuasive pamphleteer of all time and also one of the most controversial.⁵⁰ In the next few pages the replies by colonial loyalists were discussed, for Common Sense came under strong attack by Tories and other "ardent patriots who feared the tendencies of Paine's constitutional ideas as much as they approved his plea for independence."⁵¹ In this particular section, Dr. Bailyn analyzed the powerful replies and attacks on Common Sense. This was, without question, one of the most informative and intriguing portions within his discussion of Tom Paine's Common Sense and the origins of the American Revolution.

Daniel Boorstin is another American historian whose interest lay in observing pragmatic American responses to immediate challenges and stressing the consequences of ideas in behavior. In his study, The Americans: The National Experience, published in 1965, Dr. Boorstin commented briefly about Tom Paine's Common Sense.

Common Sense (January, 1776), by Thomas Paine, who had only two years before arrived in America, was an effective, if crude, polemic for independence, but it was hardly a profound or durable theory of government. Paine, anxious to propagandize for revolutionary causes, turned the "sovereignty" absolutes of Tory metaphysicians upside down and proclaimed absolutes of his own which had not much more to do with the case.⁵²

Dr. Boorstin concluded his remarks about Paine and his political theory, as expressed in Common Sense, with the statement that John Adams had a clearer comprehension of the American cause and "offered an

antidote to Paine's simples and absolutes in this Thoughts on Government (1776). . . ."53

Professor John R. Alden in his book, A History of the American Revolution, discussed Thomas Paine, the man, as well as the pamphlet, Common Sense, that effective vehicle which passionately altered public opinion over to the revolutionary cause.

In Alden's estimation, Thomas Paine was no ordinary fellow. "He had doubtless imbibed a Quakerism desire to do good; he had studied Newtonian science; and he had become a Deist."⁵⁴ In answer to Theodore Roosevelt's unjustified slanderous remark about Paine, Dr. Alden retaliated with a defense in the following statement:

Paine was remarkable for the cleanliness of his person; he was tall; and his belief in a Divine Being was similar to that of John Adams, of Thomas Jefferson, of George Washington, of many another distinguished Patriot of unquestioned virtue.⁵⁵

Dr. Alden then proceeded to analyze Common Sense as to the effectiveness of its arguments and impact of its eloquent phraseology. In his concluding declaration defending Common Sense as having a significant impact upon the call for complete separation, Dr. Alden stated:

It is not known that Paine converted any Tory. One may not doubt that he convinced some Patriots who had clung tightly to the British connection that it must be severed. He unquestionably gave voice, fluently, vividly, and fervidly, to opinions and feelings which many Patriots entertained, but had been unable to express for themselves. He both revealed and stimulated a tide toward independence.⁵⁶

This conventional evaluation was defended in another textbook, Foundations of American Independence: 1763-1815, also published in 1972 by the prominent British historian and reader in American history

at Cambridge University, J. R. Pole. In his opinion, "British intransigence narrowed American choices; but many colonists still hoped for a reprieve, failing to see how little ground was left to them"⁵⁷

It was at this moment that Common Sense made its dramatic debut.

Professor Pole then commented about Tom Paine and his literary talent.

Thomas Paine, a self-taught East Anglian corset maker, had lived in the colonies only two years, but had soon made himself known in Philadelphia political circles. He was in no sense an original thinker, but he possessed an electrifying power of talking neither up nor down but straight to ordinary readers in a language that formulated and set free their thoughts--or the thoughts they had not quite dared to think.⁵⁸

The importance of Paine's pamphlet, Common Sense, as a propaganda piece, Dr. Pole explained, was in both its language and timing. It simply "liberated people from outworn loyalties at a moment of doubt and tension by addressing them in a style unfettered by the customary rhetorical elaborations and legalistic refinements."⁵⁹ Of major consequence was the description of King George as "the royal brute of England." This, in the opinion of Dr. Pole, "came as a joyous shock to the common people."⁶⁰

Professor Pole concluded his remarks about Thomas Paine with an interesting comparison between Paine and Patrick Henry of Virginia:

Paine was no orator, and Patrick Henry no writer. But the two men had something in common. They were the most urgent and articulate spokesmen of a class and a generation that had been obliged in the past to petition their elders and to get a hearing only through the advocacy of their superiors.⁶¹

The American historian, John McMaster, performed a great service to the field of Paine scholarship and study when he said that the contrast between Thomas Paine, the man, and his writings was indeed great.⁶²

This profound observation can be considered a significant key in attaining a reasonable insight and an understanding of the treatment Paine has received throughout the years by his biographers and critics.

The professional historians and their remarks about Thomas Paine, his life, career and influence, as described in this chapter, show a rather marked contrast in treatment as opposed to those major and minor biographers and critics discussed earlier. These historians, selected as being representative of their traditional schools or for their independent thought, seem to introduce a greater objectivity into the analysis of Tom Paine and his influence. It is a credit to their profession in that they are able to view Paine more impersonally in spite of an occasional display of bias against his deism and religious philosophy as expressed in his Age of Reason. This display of purposed objectivity is an antithesis to their fellow biographers and critics whose opinions often color their treatments with excessive partisanship of both a positive and negative nature.

If there is an explanation for this rather conspicuous contrast in treatment, perhaps the answer lies in that the historians are dealing, for the most part, with the written ideas of a man rather than the man himself. Generally, the historians are concerned with concrete values more than traits of personality and this seemingly empowers them with a greater capacity for scholarly objectivity. However, in spite of an acumen for scholarship, those historians, like Philip S. Foner and David F. Hawke, who have written biographical studies of

Thomas Paine became irresistibly involved with their subject. In their efforts to analyze the man and his works, they were often unable to totally dissect, with a clean incision, the flesh from the bones. Thomas Paine was a controversial personality, an enigma whose changeableness and inconsistency made investigation difficult and evaluation almost impossible. Those biographers who endeavored to penetrate and portray the real Tom Paine have, generally, become so, unintentionally in many cases, emotionally involved that complete impartiality was no longer achievable. Their aims and goals have been of the highest order, but the end results have often been too partisan to be effective analyses. Those critics who were able to write a short, concise critique with the main emphasis placed on an examination of Paine's philosophy as expressed in his writings have more often succeeded in presenting basically unbiased, objective treatments. However, while these efforts are nonpartisan and quite matter-of-fact, they are also rather uninteresting, for the element of controversy is no longer apparent and the mysterious paradox disappears. The consequence is that the student of Paine may be able to comprehend and analyze his writing and its effectiveness in the light of nineteenth- and twentieth-century realities, but that fleeting spirit of Paine, the man, is never quite captured unless some personal involvement is allowed to come into play. Therefore, every biographer and critic has contributed significantly, in his own way, in adding another piece to the complicated puzzle known as Thomas Paine.

NOTES

¹ Donald Connolly, "The Death of Thomas Paine," Yale University Literary Gazette, 30 (January, 1956), 119.

² George Bancroft, History of the United States, Vol. VIII (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1860), p. 236.

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⁶ Ibid.

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⁸ Ibid.

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CHAPTER VII

PEN OR MUSKET: LITERARY CRITICISM OF THE
WORKS OF THOMAS PAINE

It is an undeniable fact that the writings of Thomas Paine created his reputation. If it had not been for one pamphlet in particular, Common Sense, and its profound influence upon colonial public opinion the name of Thomas Paine, perhaps, would never have been recorded in the annals of American and British history.

Generally speaking, it would be a rare occurrence indeed if Paine's biographers and critics did not attempt in some degree to analyze his works, his style of writing and the reasons why they were so popular, influential and occasioned such momentous reaction from all levels of society. This being the case, few biographers or critics would suggest that Tom Paine had no genuine talent as an author, journalist or narrator of the events and visions of the eighteenth-century Age of Reason. Instead, there is a consensus among Paine scholars that he possessed an authentic gift of dramatic self-expression through the written word. The major point of controversy between scholars concerns the question of creativity, the originality of his thought versus the originality of expression and communication.

Using Common Sense as the touchstone for testing the quality and influence of Paine's writing, even his hostile biographers recognized the importance of this particular work. James Cheetham admitted that, aside from the question of Paine's patriotism and his dubious

character, there is no "question in relation to the effect which Common Sense and the Crisis had on American Independence. That effect was unquestionably great."¹ However, earlier Cheetham had clearly emphasized his opinion of the thoughts expressed in that treatise in the following statement:

His observations on the origin of government, but lightly touching the subject, are trite; those on monarchy and hereditary succession, of no greater solidity, are not new; it was on the latter, however, that he valued himself. Here, if he had not discovered a new principle, he fancied he had applied a new argument.²

Another antagonistic biographer, John Harford, who had used James Cheetham's treatment as his major reference source, reluctantly remarked that Thomas Paine's "publications were distinguished by considerable natural talent. . . ." He added, however, that they "owed the popularity they obtained still more to their peculiar adaptation to the state of public feeling in the colonies."³

Gilbert Vale, one of the first to publish a friendly biography and using the William Sherwin treatment as his main source of information, praised Common Sense as the catalyst that dramatically changed public opinion in favor of complete separation from Great Britain.

The boldness of the language, indeed, alarmed those who were in the habit of understanding for other people: they had no objection to it themselves, but they thought the people not yet prepared for such opinions; and some ludicrous scenes occurred. The people, indeed, were not prepared: they read first from curiosity, and then became convinced. Paine absolutely produced the events he sought. He wanted a declaration of independence, and he produced a wish for it.⁴

Moncure D. Conway's appraisal of Common Sense reflected his opinions as to the profound importance of this document to the American

Revolution. For Conway, the pamphlet had great value as an historical document, a mirror of the irreconcilable differences between England and her colonies. Common Sense "reflected the moral, even religious, enthusiasm which raised the struggle beyond the paltriness of a rebellion against taxation to a great human movement,--a war for an idea."⁵ As to Paine's ability to dramatically express his thoughts through this medium, Moncure Conway proclaimed that "The art with which every sentence is feathered for its aim is consummate."⁶

Crisis Number One was also highly lauded by biographer Conway. In this case, in the words of Conway, "The literary musket reaches its mark."⁷ This first pamphlet in the Crisis Papers series aided in bolstering the morale of colonial forces and also significantly helped in the reaffirmation of faith in the revolutionary cause by the civilian population. Of the first Crisis pamphlet, Conway wrote the following assessment:

The pamphlet was never surpassed for true eloquence--that is, for the power that carries its point. With skillful illustration of lofty principles by significant details, all summed with simplicity and sympathy, three of the most miserable weeks ever endured by men were raised into epical dignity.⁸

Freethinker, Paine biographer and devotee, Elbert Hubbard, was in complete agreement with the general appraisal of Common Sense and its effect upon public opinion. He did add, however, that because of the enormous popularity of the pamphlet, it was "directly responsible for the Declaration of Independence six months later and the successful revolution that followed."⁹ Mr. Hubbard saved the highest compliments for Thomas Paine, the author and stylist.

Paine was a writing man; the very first American writing man--and I am humiliated when I have to acknowledge that we had to get him from England . . . Paine is the first American writer who had a literary style and we have not had so many since but that you may count them on the fingers of one hand.¹⁰

A few pages later, Hubbard commented on specific characteristics within Thomas Paine's writing style.

Ease, fluidity, grace, imagination, energy, earnestness, mark Paine's work. No wonder it is that Franklin said, "others can rule, many can fight, but only Paine can write for us in the English tongue."¹¹

The biographer who first labeled Tom Paine a propagandist was Mary Agnes Best in her book, Thomas Paine: Prophet and Martyr of Democracy. In her estimation, "By common consent of the Revolutionary generals, Thomas Paine became the official propagandist, spell-binder-in-chief of the Revolution."¹²

Hesketh Pearson's highly sympathetic account added nothing new in interpretation or information. Basically, Mr. Pearson, using numerous quotations from Paine's works, has seemed to illustrate his talent for concise and succinct language and quickness to penetrate to the heart of the problem at hand.

Of Common Sense, Pearson praised the significant contribution brought about by the pamphlet and stated that "Paine's little pamphlet soon became 'the political bible of the people.'"¹³

S. M. Berthold, whose only real contribution lay in his enthusiasm and good intentions, had many comments to make about Common Sense and Paine's literary style.¹⁴ He applauded Tom Paine's lucidity and sharp, terse phraseology in Common Sense. Because Paine called for

no compromise, to some "his message was like a clarion call from heaven; for others, like a withering blast from hell."¹⁵ As to his gift of expression, Berthold made the following comment:

Paine was gifted with a clarity of expression that left no doubt as to his meaning and a lucidity of argument that baffled his opponents. He took a singular pride in maintaining that all his opinions originated with himself and even his enemies conceded his shrewdness and the directness of the points he raised.¹⁶

Frank Smith, who had published several articles on Paine before he attempted a biographical study, called him the "supreme propagandist of the epoch."¹⁷ His gift transformed the philosophical concepts of the day into "the spiritual ammunition of marching armies."¹⁸ Like Voltaire, Mr. Smith admitted, Thomas Paine "originated nothing, he inflamed everything."¹⁹

As a genuine propagandist, Thomas Paine achieved mastery over his audience but he did not overpower them by the mere strength of the ideas expressed therein. His words searched into the very souls of his readers and "no propagandist has ever played upon the heartstrings of humanity with more consummate skill . . . he stirred the elemental devotion to home and family. . . ."²⁰ Mr. Smith concluded that through Paine's writings, Common Sense and the thirteen Crisis Papers, the spirit of the American Revolution is revealed to the world.

W. E. Woodward's enthusiastic but poorly researched biography contained many comments about Paine's writing as expressed in his Common Sense. In Woodward's judgment the two most vital elements within Paine's literary work were simplicity and force. He did not rely on the use of quotations from the classics to prove his scholarship as

did other writers of the eighteenth century, insisted Mr. Woodward.²¹
 Instead of pomposity in his writing style, Mr. Woodward declared that

Paine's writing was inspiring, dynamic, sensible--and as simple in style as an ordinary conversation between friends who might unexpectedly run across each other on the street. He had a natural talent for putting plain facts in such a convincing form that his readers wanted to get up right then and there and get into action. He never made scholarly references to Greece and Rome, nor did he ever use words that had to be looked up in the dictionary. His writing was always intensely human.²²

Professor Alfred Owen Aldridge differed with the usual interpretation of the reasons behind Tom Paine's influence. In his opinion, most historians have assumed that Paine's influence was a direct result of his journalistic style and the compelling, dramatic manner in which he expressed himself.²³ However, Dr. Aldridge believed it was equally important to consider that perhaps "his matter may not also have been universally appealing--that readers have been attracted by the sense of finality, of an approach to the absolute, in his works communicated by his notion of first principles."²⁴

Audrey Williamson had her own opinion on the question of Paine as an original thinker. In her estimation, Tom Paine was "original only within bounds."²⁵ He, as in the case of all political writers, was subject to the political, social and economic environment of the times. Ms. Williamson also added that although Paine denied reading John Locke, "there is no evidence that he did not read the works of writers nearer his own period, indeed much to the contrary."²⁶ Therefore, his creativity was definitely dependent upon the intellectual climate of the eighteenth century, and he was undoubtedly influenced by the ideas of other contemporary writers.

Dr. David F. Hawke, who produced the most recent in depth biographical study of Thomas Paine, introduced another insight into the analysis of the potency of his writing.

Regardless of why he did it, Paine introduced into American journalism the personal report, whose authority stemmed as much from an awareness of who wrote it as from the strength of the thought and style. While leading a revolution on the political front, he had also initiated one in polemic literature.²⁷

The two most comprehensive analyses concerning the intricacies of Thomas Paine's literary style and the aims and objectives in his writing were accomplished by Dr. Harry H. Clark and Dr. Caroline G. Mercer.

Dr. Clark's scholarly and highly acclaimed publication of some of Thomas Paine's works, Thomas Paine, Representative Selections, contained an eleven-page discourse on his literary theory and practice.

The introductory statement in this discourse made by Dr. Clark set the objective of the analysis as an understanding of Paine's gift of convincing others. He simply stated that "Scholars agree that the key to his importance lies not in his ideas, but in his great 'mastery of the art of popular persuasion.'" ²⁸

In an attempt to define Tom Paine's literary theories and objectives from scattered sources, Dr. Clark proceeded to list seven aims and give examples of each from Paine's writings, personal correspondence, or wherever examples could be found.

According to Dr. Clark, Thomas Paine's first objective was to seek "candor, simplicity, and clarity."²⁹ He endeavored to eliminate all superfluous words from the ideas he expressed so that they might

appear in their most natural and uncomplicated form. The second ideal Paine incorporated in his writing was boldness, exemplified by such statements, as in his Age of Reason, "I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would go through a wood with an axe on his shoulder and fell trees."³⁰ A third element, very much a part of his writing, was Paine's awareness of the "controversial value of wit, properly controlled."³¹ Concerning the particular element, Dr. Clark added that John Adams even attributed the Federalist Party defeat in part to its failure to defend itself against "that scoffing, scorning wit, and that caustic malignity of soul, which appeared so remarkably in all the writings of Thomas Paine."³² A fourth literary ideal, according to Clark, was Paine's recognition of "the importance of an appeal to feeling."³³ He added an interesting illustration here as he discussed Paine's use of emotionalism as a literary vehicle.

It is probable that the King James Version of the Bible, which Paine had studied until he had memorized most of it, helped to mold his style in those passages where it is most feigned with emotion and where it displays his nice regard for rhythmical units, for the music of the spoken word. Paine is often most attractive when he forgets his rationalistic philosophy and writes from the heart, allowing his style to vibrate with his deep sympathy for the sufferings of the poor and the unfortunate.³⁴

Thomas Paine's fifth literary objective "involved the fruitful cooperation of the imagination and the judgment, both being regarded as essential to good writing."³⁵ As an example, Dr. Clark used a passage in which Paine censured the Abbé Raynal for his writing style and concluded that he showed remarkable insight into "the modus operandi of the writer of effective 'applied' prose. . . ."³⁶ Therefore, Dr. Clark

deduced that Thomas Paine's power of popular persuasion was no hit-or-miss proposition "but of a carefully contemplated theory of literary art."³⁷ The seventh literary objective of Thomas Paine was his endeavor to arrange his carefully constructed sentences into "an architectonic pattern designed to give them their maximum effectiveness."³⁸ This, Clark explained, was another example of Paine's obsession with orderliness, in that "He worshipped order in everything, but especially in literary composition."³⁹ He went so far as to censure Abbé Raynal, William Smith, Edmund Burke and others for their neglect of order and precision in their writing.⁴⁰

In his final remarks, Dr. Clark concluded that Thomas Paine's style was given great praise by numerous contemporary authors. Thomas Jefferson, perhaps, gave him the highest compliment when he said he considered Paine "the only other writer in America who can write better" than he, himself, could write.⁴¹

Caroline G. Mercer's dissertation, "The Rhetorical Method of Thomas Paine," has already been discussed in Chapter III, but, perhaps, a brief reiteration of her conclusions concerning Paine's literary style would prove beneficial at this time.

Like Harry H. Clark, Dr. Mercer attempted to analyze the means and methods Thomas Paine used to persuade his audiences.

While in full accord with Clark's conclusions that Paine's scientific studies had a significant bearing on his political views and on his literary practice, Dr. Mercer proceeded to detail the use of nature, the physical cosmos, as a standard in his use of arguments

having to do with natural principles. It was her opinion that his consideration of natural principles was especially useful when attempting "to persuade relatively unlettered people to adopt revolutionary ideas and try new kinds of action."⁴² Because Paine offered them "black and white statements about the rightness and wrongness of things with a simplicity and positiveness," he was able to deeply impress his audience.⁴³ He appealed to reason and his defense of clear, simple and natural, original principles that resulted in good effects and harmony, was extremely attractive to even the most practical-minded opponent, explained Dr. Mercer.⁴⁴ Here is where the rhetorical method in Paine's writing becomes so obvious, stated the author. His use of enthymemes (short proofs which correspond in rhetoric to the syllogism in dialectic) are prevalent throughout his writing. In the process his use of these enthymemes did aid in the effectiveness of his argument. Dr. Mercer explained her position in the following manner:

For the maxims or general statements with which he begins have to do not only with abstract principles but also with matters of fact. Arguments employing such maxims enable him to prove old things not only "illegal" but certainly unworkable and disastrous, and new things not only right and just but also entirely beneficent.⁴⁵

Dr. Mercer elucidated further by stating that Thomas Paine followed up his maxims or enthymemes with epilogues as witnesses to the truth of his statements. She interpreted this literary tool as if Paine were saying, "this is the general proposition apparent to the man who thinks naturally, and the facts are witness to its truth."⁴⁶ Furthermore, Paine is confident that his audience, if they use reason, will ultimately agree with him as they judge the truth of his statements for themselves.⁴⁷

In her summation, Dr. Mercer designated nine characteristics as being basic to an understanding of Thomas Paine's art of popular persuasion. First, one must, in searching for consistency in his writing, look for it in the method, not in the detail of the statements made. Secondly, Paine does not have a characteristic method that is necessarily original in every respect. His arguments can be found in many contemporary works. A third characteristic within Paine's writing is that he definitely has a system for developing his arguments. Fourthly, Thomas Paine emphasizes in his arguments the dignity of the rational man who has rights and should exercise them. In this case, the appeal to self-interest is very strong, for self-interest and social welfare are shown to coincide and not to be in competition. Another basic characteristic as described by Mercer is that Paine emphasizes that emotion and reason cooperate in harmony when man is free of prejudice and thinks generously about his neighbor. A sixth characteristic is that Paine implants in the mind of his audience admirable character traits for emulation. Another peculiar quality in Paine's writing is that, in general, his method seems to be designed for a wide audience, his arguments being broad and having to do with natural principles, "basic human traits and with effects everyone prizes--prosperity and peace."⁴⁸ In addition to this, his method is carefully fitted to persuade this wide audience to accept change and bring about necessary reform in society. The persuasion is seemingly intended to be a combination of reassurance and stimulation.

Finally, the ninth basic feature of Thomas Paine's rhetorical method is that his writing appeals to an adventurous social spirit in

his readers, as much as to their confidence in natural principles and their prudent attention to self-interest, thus persuading them to new courses of action.⁴⁹

Two recent doctoral dissertations followed Dr. Mercer's interest by analyzing the rhetorical method of Thomas Paine. Dr. Elaine Kaner Ginsberg established in her treatment, "The Rhetoric of Revolution: An Analysis of Thomas Paine's Common Sense," that Paine had employed a basically syllogistic form in writing Common Sense. She concluded, as did her predecessors, Dr. Clark and Dr. Mercer, that Thomas Paine wrote methodically and his Common Sense was well planned and displayed careful thought. In her estimation, the popularity of Common Sense was a direct result of Paine's ability to make palpable the most abstract principles. He also possessed a true gift of being able to speak to the fears, concerns and emotions of his audience. Therefore, his audience could easily identify with him and because of this easy identification and communication, Common Sense was one of the most effective pieces of propaganda to be written during the American Revolution.⁵⁰

The other study, "The Ideology and Rhetoric of Thomas Paine: Political Justification Through Metaphore," by James Anthony Betka, attempted to analyze the reasons for Paine's success in America during the Revolution.⁵¹ Dr. Betka concluded that Thomas Paine was most accurately described as a final link in a pattern of ideological transmission between Britain and her colonies. In his opinion, this important position of being a connector, a concluding, final link largely accounted for his tremendous success in America.

The American literary historian, Moses Coit Tyler, in his Literary History of the American Revolution, made numerous comments about Thomas Paine's literary skill and influence during the revolutionary period. Concerning his importance to the American cause, Professor Tyler made the following remarks:

To the study, the acceptance, the advocacy of the American Revolution, Thomas Paine brought neither a wise, or a profound, nor a cultivated mind,--not even an accurate or a temperate one; but he did bring a mind agile, alert, vivid, impressionable, humane, quick to see into things and to grasp the gist of them, and marvelous in its power of stating them--stating them with lucidity, with sparkling liveliness, with rough, incisive, and captivating force.⁵²

This classic two-volume work, which was published shortly after Moncure D. Conway's Life of Thomas Paine, appraised both Common Sense and Crisis Papers for the beneficial effects on the revolutionary cause. The influence of the pamphlet, Common Sense, was described by Professor Tyler in the following manner:

Even its smattering of historical lore, and its cheap display of statistics, and its clumsy attempt at some sort of political philosophy, did not diminish the homage with which it was read by the mass of the community, who were even less learned and less philosophical than Paine, and who, at any rate, cared much more just then for their imperiled rights, than they did either for philosophy or for learning.⁵³

The genuine talent of this pamphlet lay in that it was written for plain men who were "in desperate danger, and desperately in earnest."⁵⁴ As to the thought and style of presentation, Professor Tyler stated:

Its thought is homely, always blunt, occasionally humorous, rugged, palpable, overpowering; with just enough of generous and contemptuous passion,--love of freedom, hate of tyranny, and a consciousness of the latent, illimitable strength of its own cause. Its style never errs on the side of restraint; is never debilitated by any delicacy of feeling.

Thomas Paine did not take up his pen in the service of the amenities. Here is no urbane concession to the foe. Here are the germs of that untempered invective which sometimes grew, at a later period of his life, into literary truculence and barbarism.⁵⁵

Professor Tyler completed his discourse on Common Sense by disclosing evidence in contemporary literature of the enormous influence of this particular pamphlet between January and June, 1776.

In his second volume, Professor Tyler discussed the Crisis Papers and Paine's role as a journalist. According to the author, Thomas Paine had a journalistic temperament, "its tastes, capacities, limitations."⁵⁶ He had no real interest in the past except where it contained an important message for the present. Everything he wrote was suggested by an occasion and for a particular purpose in that his strength lay in his ability to interpret the public conscience in a language that sometimes sparked off "articulate thunder and lightning."⁵⁷

Professor Tyler promoted an interesting theory, namely that one of the major reasons for the success of both Common Sense and Crisis was Paine's use of Christian language. In those days, Tyler declared, Paine represented "not only the faith of the people in themselves, but their faith in God and in God's guidance and mastery of the affairs of this world. . . ."⁵⁸ He added that as long as Tom Paine spoke in the character of an avowed Christian to a nation of Christians, his effectiveness would be considerable. In many ways his acceptance and influence would hinge greatly on his usage of Christian language and declaration of God's omnipotent control over every possible evil league of men and devils, maintained this renowned American educator.

In 1929, W. Alison Phillips made some rather discriminating remarks about Paine and his method of writing. Phillips, a Burkean scholar, asserted that Thomas Paine had a faculty for playing on popular emotions and in fact, "was a born demagogue."⁵⁹ His style of writing was nothing more than that of a vulgar demagogue. Nevertheless, his writing was effective in an "illbred" sort of way.⁶⁰ Perhaps the main value of this essay is in the criticism he makes of Paine's arguments against Edmund Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution rather than its being of any great merit in analyzing Paine's literary skill.

Professor Harry H. Clark's, "Thomas Paine's Theories of Rhetoric," published in the Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Science, Arts and Letters in 1933, is the precursory more detailed essay to the section on Paine's literary theory and practice in his Representative Selections. In this essay, as he later concluded in Representative Selections, Professor Clark stated that Thomas Paine's political, economic and social theories, as well as his theories of rhetoric, "ultimately stem from and are fully explainable only in the lights of Newtonian science and deism."⁶¹ Indeed, Dr. Clark continued, the "pivot round which his thought revolved was scientific deism."⁶² He cited the laudatory praises given Paine by his contemporary Thomas Jefferson and then came to the following conclusion:

And in the attainment of this superlative "glory," Paine was guided by literary theories which, if by no means ideal, at least bore the test of practice. For he commanded the attention of half a million readers, vigorously stirring them to contemplate the political, religious, and social

doctrines which helped to call into being the American and French Revolutions as well as many humanitarian movements of later days, doctrines forcefully and clearly presented in a style which served as a trusty tool and was occasionally not without elements of beauty.⁶³

In 1941, a classic, scholarly study of propaganda during the American Revolutionary period was published. This highly acclaimed treatment, Propaganda and the American Revolution, was authored by American historian Philip Grant Davidson. The study was basically topical in approach, with an emphasis placed on presenting the psychological methodology used by the propagandists.⁶⁴

Dr. Davidson agreed with the common statement made by many critics and historians that Paine "was not an original thinker, and, as Adams said of Common Sense, there was nothing in it that had not been frequently urged on the floor of the Continental Congress."⁶⁵

However, leaving creativity out of the picture, Davidson classified Tom Paine as an "agitator and propagandist supreme."⁶⁶ Although many of his radical ideas were not shared by his compatriots, "propertied leaders everywhere had no compunction about using the crude vigor of Paine's English to further their own objectives."⁶⁷ The power of his essay, Crisis Number One, is still there. Dr. Davidson appraised this Crisis essay in the following statement:

The stirring sibilants, the epigrammatic vigor of these lines heartened the discouraged little band of winter patriots left with Washington.⁶⁸

The author terminated his discussion with the allegation that perhaps the greatest single feature that labeled Paine a successful and influential agitator and propagandist was that all his writings were

well timed and "perfectly adapted to the needs of the moment."⁶⁹

As in the case of Common Sense, its faultless timing, combined with bold argument, vigorous language and universal appeal, caused it to be one of the finest pieces of propaganda produced during the American Revolution.⁷⁰ In summary, Dr. Davidson believed that Thomas Paine was a master propagandist even though he was not an original thinker. His command of the English language and his gift for the dramatic phrase and perfect timing did give his writing great emotional appeal and thus tremendously influenced a mass audience.

Biographer, author and critic Howard Fast wrote an article for New Masses in 1945, entitled "Who was Tom Paine?" Mr. Fast, whose biographical novel, Citizen Tom Paine, had been published two years before, commented on Paine's literary genius. Mr. Fast's own political philosophy at that time in his career was "far to the left" so Thomas Paine's revolutionary spirit was of great interest to him. Concerning the effectiveness of his writing, Mr. Fast made the following statement:

Even with these sketchy facts, we can begin to understand what made the man, Thomas Paine, and what forces gave birth to the flaming documents he wrote--documents that moved more men to more earth-shaking results, politically, than any up to that time and even since that time, if we except the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin.⁷¹

As to his writing style, Mr. Fast commented that the most important clue to Paine's writings was that they were dramatic. Other reformers, like William Penn and Roger Williams, wrote abstractly of the pattern of change while Tom Paine "wrote realistically of the method of change."⁷² Penn and Williams, added Fast, were philosophers while Paine was a revolutionist who actually created a method of revolution.

They were basically thinkers while Paine was a doer, exclaimed the author. Thomas Paine was far more important than those philosophers who dealt with theory and ideals because he "dealt with the dynamics of one force against another."⁷³ This was what made Paine's writing so dramatic and effective, concluded Howard Fast. "He stepped off a boat and into the ripest and most gorgeous revolutionary opportunity that ever existed."⁷⁴ Thus, Fast insisted, "the prophet of the common man stepped into the land and era of the common man. The fine gears of history, so often haphazard, now purposefully meshed."⁷⁵

Dr. Perry Miller published an essay, "Thomas Paine, Rationalist," in Nation in 1946. In this study Perry Miller asserted his opinion that Paine was "the ideal spokesman in a time of hesitation, when issues needed to be crystallized, when the period of debate was closed and arms must decide the contest."⁷⁶

While Tom Paine possessed the ability to simplify the issues at hand, there was more to his achievement and effectiveness as a political pamphleteer, declared Dr. Miller. His command of the written word was the key and no one could have expressed it better than Thomas Jefferson when he said: "No writer has exceeded Paine in ease and familiarity of style, in perspicuity of expression, happiness of elucidation, and in simple and unassuming language."⁷⁷

Thomas Paine was a popularizer, not a theorist, contended Miller. His use of simple, dramatic and direct phrases made his writing effective and appealing to a wide audience. He was not a gentleman, no scholar, but "he was an artist first and foremost, but an artist

within narrow limits."⁷⁸ He was limited, according to Miller, by his eighteenth-century rationalism, and this man of the people "could make the doctrine of the learned live for the people only so long as they would listen to the language of rationalism."⁷⁹ His popularity declined in the midst of nineteenth-century liberalism. Dr. Miller concluded with the statement that Thomas Paine was a victim of the times because the "price of popularizing for contemporaries is temporary popularity."⁸⁰

Professor Alfred O. Aldridge prepared for his 1959 biography of Thomas Paine by spending much time in researching Paine and publishing numerous articles about him. One essay, "The Poetry of Thomas Paine," analyzed his talent in that creative field. After careful study, Dr. Aldridge became convinced that Paine authored "two poems of unusual merit, as well as a number of bagatelles in verse."⁸¹ In his considered opinion, Dr. Aldridge declared that Paine's "The Death of General Wolfe," although probably originally written before he immigrated to America, had genuine merit as a work of art. When the poem-song was published in the Pennsylvania Magazine it became extremely popular. Even the antagonistic biographer, James Cheetham, admitted it was "a beautiful song."⁸²

Another poem, also printed in the Pennsylvania Magazine in 1775, was "Liberty Tree." This poem-song was widely reprinted by Paine's contemporaries under different titles. Later Paine, himself, revised it into a song to fit all popular revolts against autocracy.⁸³ The rewritten version was first published in the very obscure deistical

periodical, The Beacon, which was edited by the first major sympathetic American biographer, Gilbert Vale. Vale's Beacon, according to Aldridge, was the only source to ever print this revised version of "Liberty Tree."⁸⁴

In Dr. Aldridge's estimation, the most notable and best of Thomas Paine's poems was "To the King of England."⁸⁵ It is quite interesting that this particular poem was printed under the title of "An Address to Lord Howe" in America.⁸⁶ The poem seemingly circulated over a wider area than any of Paine's other poetry. The reason for its popularity was perhaps because "of its sentiments and because of its inherent aesthetic value."⁸⁷

Dr. Aldridge's purpose in writing the essay was to enlighten the public to the fact that Thomas Paine "devoted more attention to poetry than most people realize."⁸⁸ Paine wrote poetry for his own amusement and, despite "a conscious effort to discourage his own poetic vein, he continued to write verse during every period of his life."⁸⁹ His verse did not create his reputation but, even so, his poetry, especially his address to King George, "has intrinsic merits to justify our attention as a work of art."⁹⁰

A University of Nottingham professor, James T. Boulton, wrote an essay entitled "Tom Paine and the Vulgar Style." This 1962 article appeared in the Oxford University Press's book, Essays in Criticism. It was Dr. Boulton's thesis that "because our critical tools are not normally sharpened on his kind of writing an author like Paine tends to be ignored."⁹¹

Two of the reasons why Thomas Paine's writing, using the pamphlet, Part One of the Rights of Man, as an example, were influential, wrote Dr. Boulton, was his ability to simplify his revolutionary doctrines into the common language and to express himself with such lucid directness.⁹² His use of the allegory was also an effective tool, which entitles Paine to be considered a conscious artist, Boulton explained.⁹³

Using quotations from contemporary critics, like Horace Walpole and Sir Brooke Boothby, Professor Boulton prepared the setting for Paine's classification as a writer whose style was coarse and vulgar. Horace Walpole's comment about The Rights of Man was that it was "so coarse, that you think he meant to degrade the language as much as the government."⁹⁴ The Whig pamphleteer, Sir Brooke Boothby, was in full agreement with Walpole but added that Paine had all "the eloquence of a night-cellar," his choice of words "well enough calculated to impose upon the vulgar."⁹⁵ The editor of The Monthly Review, who was somewhat sympathetic to Paine's politics, also found his style to be "desultory, uncouth, and inelegant. His wit coarse, and sometimes disgraced by wretched puns, and his language, though energetic, is awkward, ungrammatical, and often debased by vulgar phraseology."⁹⁶

Professor Boulton commented that Paine definitely used "vulgar phraseology." However, setting coarseness and grammar aside, the pamphlet, Rights of Man, was an effectual piece of pamphleteering because it worked!⁹⁷ As to his vulgarity, Paine's effectiveness depended in part on this element within his style. The term "vulgar" should be considered as a critical word not implying boorish or debasing, but rather as a descriptive term meaning "plain, of the people, vulgus."⁹⁸

The great strength of Paine's vulgar style was in his careful choice of idiom, the tone and rhythm, because the issues he presented had to be discussed in the language of common speech in order to be appealing and persuasive to those individuals most readily affected by the political, social and economic climate, explained Professor Boulton.⁹⁹

The most useful proposition, perhaps, to proceed from this methodical analysis of Paine's writing style was the author's premise that Paine used vulgar speech to undermine the influence of Edmund Burke. Boulton explained his theory in the following manner:

By translating Burke's language into the idiom of everyday Paine diminishes his opponent's stature and suggests that his seeming authority resides in the bombastic quality of his diction rather than in the validity of his argument. Paine, on the other hand, is seen to make his points in words that are readily understood; he does not have recourse (so he would have us believe) to any jargon, learned or unlearned, but uses vulgar speech, the language of common sense and common experience.¹⁰⁰

Professor Boulton concluded his study on Paine's style with statements to the effect that his writing has the merits of clarity, simplicity, directness, energy and "the powerful conviction carried by the speaking voice."¹⁰¹ He knew what his readers could take and fully understood the needs of his audience. His mastery of techniques appropriate to the specific occasion cannot be overlooked even though his writing must be rated low by normal standards. Therefore, Boulton continued, one must realize that "the urgency of the times, the seriousness of the issues, and the needs both literary and political of his readers all underline the value of the vulgar style such as he provided."¹⁰²

Another scholar interested in contrasting the literary styles of Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine, Matthew Hodgart, published an essay, "Politics and Prose Style in the Late Eighteenth Century: The Radicals," in 1962.

Professor Hodgart classified both Paine and Burke as radicals. The reasons he gave for including Edmund Burke among the radicals were that he was "an outsider from the Irish tradition, he invented a new analysis of English politics, and a new style for presenting this analysis."¹⁰³

Professor Hodgart is in accord with the majority of scholars who testify that Thomas Paine was not an original thinker. In this case, Hodgart enumerates the many outside influences upon Paine's thought and writing style. Authors such as Jonathan Swift, John Milton and John Bunyan made their mark upon Paine. Benjamin Franklin, the Dissenting tradition, "as it appears in secularized form in Price and Priestley," and the King James Bible also influenced him.¹⁰⁴ In fact, Hodgart is convinced that his style "is essentially in the tradition of the plain argument: as in Defoe and Franklin, the syntax and structure follow the thought."¹⁰⁵ This results in what often borders on bluntness, but a calculated bluntness carefully considered.¹⁰⁶ Thus Tom Paine "was evidently the most self-conscious of radical stylists, and was successful in reaching a huge audience largely because he had thought so hard about the art of propaganda."¹⁰⁷

In his discussion of what he considered the greatest individual influence upon Thomas Paine, Professor Hodgart submitted the thesis

"that Burke was the most powerful single influence that Paine underwent."¹⁰⁸ Because Thomas Paine could command a wider audience than Edmund Burke, with this fact in view, he purposely "simplified Burke's parliamentary flourishes."¹⁰⁹

The two men, Burke and Paine, were the same brand of radical, insisted Dr. Hodgart, and although Paine was "a narrower thinker and a less man than Burke," he was nevertheless "a working statesman, and the friend of statesmen, he was at home in the political world that he was striving to change--and at home in the natural world from which he drew many of his images."¹¹⁰

According to Professor Hodgart there was another man who was greatly influenced by Edmund Burke, William Godwin. After describing details of Burkean influence upon Godwin, Hodgart reached the following conclusion:

Neither Godwin nor Paine attained "the highest excellence of composition." Only occasionally in Paine and hardly ever in Godwin do political theory and propaganda achieve the autonomy of literature, as they do in Milton, Swift, or Burke. They are still read for their importance in the history of ideas, and sometimes for their ideas; but they deserve a place in the history of style, if only because they show the diverse effects of two traditions in English radicalism.¹¹¹

Dr. Richard M. Gummere in his book, Seven Wise Men of Colonial America, offered three ways of viewing the life and works of Thomas Paine. The first way is to picture the patriot who loved his adopted land and, with his Common Sense and Crisis, aided in the founding of a nation. The second image that one might view would be the would-be reformer, gadfly and general embarrassment to his adopted country. A

third way to view Tom Paine is to see him as the "gifted journalist, a stylist who set a high standard for critics and commentators."¹¹²

It is the "third Paine" that engrossed Dr. Gummere's greatest interest.

The main thrust of this study was to determine whether or not Thomas Paine was anticlassical. It was the author's earnest belief that Paine was not anticlassical and used ancient sources for illustration purposes in his writing just as did James Otis in his orations or Thomas Jefferson in his notes. The only significant difference, declared Dr. Gummere, was that Thomas Paine had to resort to translations while Otis and Jefferson could read the original languages.¹¹³

According to the author, the journalistic Mr. Paine used classical sources sparingly and from memory. An anticlassical attitude was not exhibited by Paine as he generally signed his editorials, beginning in 1775, in the current fashionable manner, as Aesop, Atlanticus, Vox Populi or Humanus. These were not the only examples of "classicism" in Paine's writing, continued Dr. Gummere, for "these contributions were accompanied by New Anecdotes of Alexander the Great, Cupid and Hymen, and a revised version of an earlier poem on the death of Wolfe; this work portrayed Britannia mourning her universally beloved leader. . . ."¹¹⁴

While considering his writing style, continued Dr. Gummere, one can see where he received his due attention. He demonstrated a mastery, a brilliant style and a "native ability to state his case with clarity and force."¹¹⁵ Although he was a part of the same literary channel as Defoe and Junius, "his style was a creation of his own."¹¹⁶ Paine seemed

to have a foreign language phobia, not confined to reading Greek and Latin. He spent almost ten years in France but never mastered the Gallic tongue. Dr. Gummere added that with his alert mind and quick wit he should have learned French quite easily, as Joel Barlow and Gouverneur Morris had done. Seeking an answer to this paradox, Gummere seemingly leaves an impression that Paine might, along with his phobia against foreign languages, have been a little lazy and stubborn in this respect.

Dr. Gummere concluded his study with quotations from Paine's works illustrating the influence of Plato's theory of ideas upon his writing. He finished his discourse by stating that, "It is undoubtedly true that Paine read Plato in translation. . . . Paine was voracious if sometimes a superficial reader."¹¹⁷ In any case there is enough evidence in his writings to prove that Thomas Paine was not anticlassical as some critics have led us to believe, Gummere declared.

Winthrop D. Jordan, Professor of History at the University of California at Berkeley, wrote an extremely provocative article entitled, "Familial Politics: Thomas Paine and the Killing of the King, 1776," for the Journal of American History in 1973. This essay certainly supplied a new twist to American Revolutionary history by explaining the subliminal effect of Thomas Paine's pamphlet, Common Sense, on the colonial population.

Dr. Jordan begins his study by proposing that for all intents and purposes King George III was killed in the American provinces "vicariously but very effectively by an anonymous hand and that this

act of murder constitutes a legitimate subject for historical inquiry."¹¹⁸ That anonymous hand belonged to Thomas Paine and the murder weapon was a pamphlet called Common Sense. With the possible exception of Uncle Tom's Cabin, declared Dr. Jordan, Paine's Common Sense "was demonstrably the most immediately influential political or social tract ever published in this country."¹¹⁹ To illustrate the profound impact of Common Sense upon the contemporary scene, Jordan proceeded to quote from various sources (George Washington, Abigail Adams and others) in which lavish praise was heaped upon the then anonymous author.

Dr. Jordan's thesis invoked the necessity of a more analytical reading of Common Sense. This in depth investigation would reveal, contended Jordan, that the appeal of the tract was essentially subliminal, which made it a powerful vehicle indeed.¹²⁰ Tom Paine's discussion of monarchy and hereditary succession was "heavily freighted with appeals to the unarticulated half-thought of his audience."¹²¹ Here, the use of Scripture to back up his tirade against the evils of monarchy made Paine's argument exceptionally attractive.

Time after time, Paine was able "to play upon hidden chords of feeling" through statements calling for the "symbolic transfer of sovereign power from the king to the people of the American Republic."¹²² In the process the crown, the king, had to be broken into pieces-- "pieces that could be distributed to the people in order that they could acquire his power."¹²³ Thus the king is dead and his power is in the hands of the people. Dr. Jordan then compared this sacrificial ceremony to a political "Eucharist" which had an intense psychological impact

upon public opinion.¹²⁴ The ultimate result of the psychological impact of Common Sense, explained Jordan, was to meet the immediate need of the colonists--"a need of which they were not fully aware--to deny their king as their sovereign father."¹²⁵ Thus "Paine was able to help Americans to feel less filial and more, as it were, fraternal among themselves."¹²⁶

Professor Jordan then advanced his opinion that Thomas Paine had not been original in his argument against monarchy and its inherent evils. It is virtually certain, wrote Jordan, that he "borrowed from another writer most of the ideas he advanced concerning God's scriptural disapprobation of monarchy."¹²⁷ The source for much of his argument was John Milton, because two of Milton's tracts contained the same evidence, presented the same case as did Paine in Common Sense.¹²⁸

The author concluded his thought-provoking essay with a short psychoanalysis of Thomas Paine. Using the term "aggressive hostility," which originated in Paine's past, Jordan presented his case, stating that he "was a person who delighted in the destruction of tyrants and that he protected his own self-image by compassionately nursing a tyrant whom he wished to destroy, thereby denying that he, Paine, could harbor murderous passion."¹²⁹ Unintentionally then, declared Jordan, it seems likely that such an individual who could dwell "upon such fantasies could very easily undertake, without of course knowing it, to kill a living king."¹³⁰

The ultimate consequence of Thomas Paine's successful endeavor was that "he performed a vital service to Americans--but a momentary

one: the sons of the Revolution soon lapsed into acclaiming their staunchest leader as the Father of His Country."¹³¹

Harvard professor Bernard Bailyn was another historian who was enchanted with Thomas Paine's pamphlet, Common Sense. In his essay, "Common Sense," Dr. Bailyn called the tract "the most brilliant pamphlet written during the American Revolution, and one of the most brilliant pamphlets ever written in the English language."¹³² Without question, declared Bailyn, "it is a work of genius--slapdash as it is, rambling as it is, crude as it is."¹³³ Significantly, it "touched some extraordinarily sensitive nerve in American political awareness in the confusing period in which it appeared," stated the author.¹³⁴ Added to the fact that it caused some of the hesitant and conservative leaders in the society to consider the possibilities of a great future that might be opening up in America, Common Sense appeared on the scene "at what was perhaps the perfect moment to have a maximum effect" on the population in general.¹³⁵ After making this statement, Dr. Bailyn proceeded to explain why the timing was so perfect and what fallacies in thinking were prevalent at this particular period in American history.

The immediate impact of Common Sense was largely due to the pamphlet's "ringing assertiveness, its shrill unwavering declaration that all the right was on the side of independence and all the wrong was on the side of loyalty to Britain."¹³⁶ Dr. Bailyn stressed that this assertiveness "seemed to many to be more outrageous than prophetic, and rather ridiculous if not slightly insane."¹³⁷ In fact, the author continued, even John Adams noted that "as many people were offended by the pamphlet as were persuaded by it."¹³⁸ Adams, years later, expressed

his opinion of the pamphlet by calling it "a poor, ignorant, malicious, short-sighted, crapulous mass."¹³⁹ Bailyn added at this point that such comments made it very difficult, if not impossible, to "know the proportions on either side with any precision."¹⁴⁰

With uncertainty present in determining the degree to which this pamphlet precipitated the Declaration of Independence in July, 1776, it is necessary to search for something more, something extraordinary within the pamphlet itself, contended Dr. Bailyn. With this purpose in mind, the author advanced his accounting of the phenomenal qualities of Common Sense. He called the language remarkable "for its prose alone," declaring it to be "a notable document--unique among the pamphlets of the American Revolution."¹⁴¹ One, however, must go deeper, explained Dr. Bailyn, for Common Sense "is a reflection of deeper elements--qualities of mind, styles of thought, a writer's personal culture. There is something unique in the intellectual idiom of the pamphlet."¹⁴²

The intellectual force of this tract, Bailyn continued, was not in the logic of its arguments, but in "its reversal that forced thoughtful readers to consider . . . a wholly new way of looking at the entire range of problems involved."¹⁴³ Thus contemporary leaders were forced to reevaluate the Anglo-American controversy from all sides. After this new appraisal took place, the result was a call for complete separation from Britain.

In the last pages of his essay, Professor Bailyn discussed the aim of Common Sense. In his opinion that objective was clearly "to

tear the world apart--the world as it was known and as it was constituted."¹⁴⁴ In accomplishing this objective, Common Sense, Bailyn affirmed, had "nothing of the close logic, scholarship, and rational tone of the best of the American pamphlets."¹⁴⁵ In fact, he continued, "Paine was an ignoramus, both in ideas and in the practice of politics, next to Adams, Wilson, Jefferson, or Madison."¹⁴⁶ Indeed, Paine "could not discipline his thoughts; they were sucked off continuously from the sketchy outline he apparently had in mind when he began the pamphlet into the boiling vortex of his emotions."¹⁴⁷ Even his style of writing contained nothing of the usual subtleties, the learning and logic of other contemporary authors. Instead, Thomas Paine's language was "violent, slashing, angry, indignant."¹⁴⁸

In his conclusion as to the reasons why Common Sense must be considered one of the most unique pamphlets of the American Revolutionary period, Dr. Bailyn stated the following convictions:

Common Sense did not touch off the movement for a formal declaration of independence, and it did not create the Revolutionary leaders' determination to build a better world, more open to human aspirations, than had ever been known before. But it stimulated both; and it exposes in unnaturally vivid dilation the anger--born of resentment, frustration, hurt, and fear--that is an impelling force in every transforming revolution.¹⁴⁹

Therefore, Dr. Bailyn is suggesting that the social ramifications aroused by Paine's Common Sense was the greatest contribution of the pamphlet. It, frankly, blew the top off the smoldering kettle of hatred and indignation in colonial America against the British insult and constant inference of American inferiority.

The latest essay to discuss the attributes of the writing of Thomas Paine was published in the Southern Speech Communication Journal in the spring of 1975. Thomas Clark, then a doctoral candidate in American Studies, Rhetoric and Public Address at Indiana University, attempted to compare and contrast rhetorical image-making as it occurred in the Thomas Paine and William Smith propaganda debates. Thomas Clark wrote of these eight letters, written in rebuttal to Paine's Common Sense, which appeared in the Philadelphia Gazette and other colonial newspapers. The letters, penned under the name of Cato, assailed the revolutionary ideas expressed in Common Sense and advocated a truce with Britain on "constitutional terms."¹⁵⁰ The highest social circles in Philadelphia were extremely interested in these letters and replies by William Smith, Provost of the College of Philadelphia, and the author of Common Sense.

While there were many Tory responses to the pamphlet, Common Sense, Thomas Paine replied only to Cato, using the name Forester, in the Pennsylvania Journal.

The success of Common Sense, according to Thomas Clark, was Paine's single devotion to the principle of the necessity and rightness of self-rule. This doctrine served as the nucleus around which he ordered his arguments and made his sweeping moral judgments. This single principle "gave him a perspective from which to rebut objections to revolution."¹⁵¹ In contrast, William Smith offered the argument of circumstance with compromise as his main priority. His choice to defend a compromise solution, continued Clark, brought about a serious

deficiency, a lack of a positive, controlling argument in this case. The result was excessive "wordiness, indirectness, and inconsistency," while Paine's replies sparkled with consistency and conciseness.¹⁵² In addition, Paine's pragmatic appeals to a realistic solution far surpassed Smith's timid attempts to overlook admittedly malevolent British actions and make excuses for the long-range consequences of these obvious injustices by the British crown. William Smith's timidity "made him vulnerable to attack as a moral idiot."¹⁵³ Thomas Paine replied to Smith's indecisiveness with the accusation that he was a man who had "not virtue enough to be angry."¹⁵⁴

Comparing the style and image-making of Thomas Paine and William Smith as projected in their debate through correspondence, Thomas Clark suggested that Paine was the far more effective debater. "By clarifying his ideas in successive antithetical phrase," he helped his audience to understand the "rhetorical distinction between society and government."¹⁵⁵ He varied his use of restatement to the degree that the arguments he presented "were not condescending in tenor, its cadence echoing an almost Biblical resonance, its dignity inhering in its very formalization."¹⁵⁶ Therefore, Clark continued, the reader needed little education in order to understand what Paine had to say. The language was appealing to the widest audience because of its innate pragmatism and down-to-earth solutions to the problems at hand. In contrast, William Smith sounded like a schoolmaster and "betrayed an insensitivity to the prevailing mood of the average reader. . . ."¹⁵⁷

Clark completed his study with comments on Thomas Paine's vulgar style. While many critics attribute the popularity of Common Sense

and other works of Paine to his vulgar style, Clark maintained that this was not the case. His conclusions were stated as follows in this victory of the positive over the negative image:

. . . on the eve of the revolution, William Smith's Cato Letters cast a shadowy second persona, a pedantic, submissive, devious image perceived by many colonists as inimical to their values and interests; whereas Tom Paine's Common Sense projected an image of a self-reliant, straightforward, and daring individualist, a rhetorical personality that embodied moral and practical sentiments with which many colonists favorably identified.¹⁵⁸

The numerous comments made by biographers and critics concerning the creativity and writing ability of Thomas Paine, as expressed through some of his major works, has revealed one important fact. It is obvious that although critics might disagree on the originality of his political thought, Paine's talent, his gift of self-expression through the written word is undeniable. As to what specific elements made his writing uniquely popular and persuasive, many scholars offered different opinions. However, one indisputable element was constantly referred to by nearly all of the critics and that was that Thomas Paine wrote in a language of the common people and, therefore, reached and influenced a far wider audience than most of his contemporaries.

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CHAPTER VIII

SCEPTER OR TORCH: CRITICISM OF THOMAS
PAINE'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Thomas Paine was a prolific author who possessed knowledge of and enjoyed writing about a variety of topics or themes. He wrote on such subjects as the properties of gunpowder, the construction of an iron bridge, the causes of yellow fever and, as a naval strategist, he designed a gunboat for the American navy and devised a plan for the invasion of England by Napoleon Bonaparte and the French fleet.

Aside from the obvious diverse interests that Paine demonstrated in writing, quite competently upon a large variety of subjects, one fact remains. His favorite topic evolved around political theory, for nearly two-thirds of his writing was devoted to this particular study.

While Common Sense, generally speaking, was the touchstone for evaluating the influence and effectiveness of Thomas Paine as a writer, a master of rhetoric, or propagandist of the first order, his supreme effort, Rights of Man, was most often the primarily evaluative vehicle for analyzing and criticizing his political philosophy.

It is difficult to categorize or departmentalize schools of interpretation concerning the question of Paine's political philosophy. However, there exists some small degree of unanimity in treatment. Those highly partisan biographers, historians and critics, such as Moncure D. Conway, Howard Fast, Joseph Lewis, Elbert Hubbard, John E. Remsburg and Vernon L. Parrington, who uphold and idolize Thomas Paine

as a paragon of republican principles, a martyr and prophet of democracy, are reluctant to admit that his political theory was anything but genuinely original. Needless to say, not all the partisan Paine devotees exhibit this same sentiment, for some, Audrey Williamson and Bernard Bailyn for example, maintain that Paine was only original within certain limits.

The anti-Paine school, whose membership includes such fellows as George Chalmers, James Cheetham and John S. Harford, portrays Paine as a radical who was intent on destroying all remnants of political virtue and tradition. These writers envisaged no good resulting from Mr. Paine's political polemics, which in their opinion were merely products of a dangerously intemperate and rebellious spirit deserving severe punishment and censorship.

Most of those biographers, historians and critics who endeavored and succeeded in presenting objective, scholarly accounts of Thomas Paine's life, career and influence, are also disinclined to label most of his political thoughts as being basically original in content. These individuals, as Alfred Owen Aldridge, Harry Hayden Clark, David F. Hawke and R. R. Palmer, were extremely careful to show that many of the ideas as expressed in Rights of Man had been previously stated by John Locke and other political theorists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indeed, these critics discovered a certain amount of parallelism and similar ideology representative of popular eighteenth-century radical political thought throughout Paine's writings.

The following treatments concerning Thomas Paine have their emphases placed upon achieving an analysis and criticism of his political

thought as usually represented in his political treatise, Rights of Man.

In 1845, W. J. Fox published a series entitled Lectures Addressed Chiefly to the Working Classes. He devoted over fifty pages of his second volume to a discussion of Thomas Paine and Edmund Burke. In his attempt to understand that famous event, the French Revolution of 1789, Fox believed it necessary to compare and contrast the two different positions and modes of contemporary thought portrayed by Paine and Burke. Mr. Fox saw Thomas Paine as typical of those who stood for natural democracy while Edmund Burke represented those who upheld artificial aristocracy. In his own words, these two men "were fitting champions to fight out this battle of principle, while the excitement of the events was at its very highest."¹

The author spent several pages examining Thomas Paine's early years, from childhood in Thetford to an editorship of the Pennsylvania Magazine in Philadelphia in 1775. Although no new information resulted from the author's biographical sketch, an interesting comment contrasting the vocations of the two men was projected to the delight of his readers. Edmund Burke, Fox declared, was a politician by profession, a man who belonged to politics. Thomas Paine, on the other hand, had none of the advantages of proper training and experience in the political arena as compared to Edmund Burke. In his estimation, Paine was not following a natural vocation but, because he felt and knew oppression in common with his fellowmen and was able to express himself on the subject, "this made him an author and a philosopher, rendered him eloquent, made him the champion of American independence. . . ."²

W. J. Fox then endeavored to contrast the essential differences in the characters of these two combatants and in the principles they advocated. The reader, at that moment, would have anticipated an analysis of the basic political theories of both Burke and Paine. Instead, Mr. Fox spent most of his time discussing personality traits, differences in temperament and rhetorical style. The contrasts were quite surface, and a profound study never actually developed.

Fox attempted to be fair and objective in his comparison of Thomas Paine with Edmund Burke, but his true feelings became evident in the closing pages of his treatment. Obviously, he considered Thomas Paine the champion and thus lauded the victory of the self-made man over the highly educated, privileged Edmund Burke.

In September, 1899, C. E. Merriam, Jr., wrote an article, "Thomas Paine's Political Theories," for the periodical, Political Science Quarterly. In fifteen pages Professor Merriam of Columbia University developed an exposition of some of Paine's political principles in order to clearly ascertain his ability as a writer of political theory. In a concise and academic manner Professor Merriam discussed those elements he considered basic in Paine's thought, such as: the fundamental distinction between society and government, the rights of man both civil and natural, the classification of the forms of government, the evils of hereditary government and succession, the tripartite division of governmental powers into executive, legislative and judicial bodies and the evils of mixed governments.³ Finally, Merriam examined two of Thomas Paine's favorite "schemes" within the political context, the progressive income tax and the need for "agrarian justice."⁴

In the process of analyzing the basic elements in Paine's political philosophy, Professor Merriam succinctly explained the goal Paine sought, his practical politics, "a system of representative government, based on manhood suffrage."⁵

In his conclusion Professor Merriam suggested that "it seems clear that Paine cannot be classed as a great political thinker."⁶ He added that his theories of the state of nature, natural and civil rights, the social contract and tripartite government had been "marked out before and better by others."⁷ The effectiveness of his writing was further weakened by his Age of Reason "which extended his radical activity from the field of politics to that of religion."⁸ Simply, the author suggested, Thomas Paine had outlived his own theories in many instances and the conservatives in America "were inclined to forget the doctrines of that period and to think more of the duties than the rights of man."⁹ Nevertheless, his hatred of Britain and his championship of manhood suffrage "tended to make his general theory acceptable."¹⁰ In essence, Merriam summarized, John Adams' Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States and Thomas Paine's Rights of Man "represented the political theory of the two great branches of American democracy of that day."¹¹

In July, 1901, Clark Edmund Persinger's abridged version of Part One of his Master's thesis appeared in the University of Nebraska Graduate Bulletin. The objective of the author was to illustrate the fact that Thomas Paine shared, along with many of his contemporaries, five basic principles of the Revolutionary period. With little

elucidation, Presinger enumerated these commonly acknowledged basic principles:

(1) Rights are inherent in man, divinely and inalienably bestowed upon him by his Creator; (2) The origin of the state is in a compact, actual or implied; (3) The purpose or object of the State is twofold: First, the preservation of unsundered natural rights; second, the general welfare of society, or the "public good"; (4) Sovereignty is divisible, the individual surrendering a portion to the State in order that he may be made more secure in the enjoyment of that retained; (5) Any encroachment upon the unsundered portion of the individual's natural rights vitiates the social compact and gives rise to the individual right of revolution.¹²

The remaining nineteen pages of the essay were devoted to a brief analysis of such topics as: (1) Rights, their Nature and Origin; (2) The Origin of the State; (3) The Purpose of the State; (4) The Location of Sovereignty; and (5) Rights of the Individual under the State.¹³ Harry H. Clark's estimation of this treatment was: "A valuable assembly of Paine's political ideas, topically arranged, without much comment or criticism."¹⁴

Albert Matthews, in 1910, produced a short, succinct rebuttal to Moncure D. Conway's insinuation that Thomas Paine had fathered the Declaration of Independence. Mr. Conway had based his argument on two points clearly stated in the following quotation: "At this time Paine saw much of Jefferson, and there can be little doubt that the anti-slavery clause struck out of the Declaration was written by Paine."¹⁵

Matthews replied to this error in judgment by commenting that Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson had not met until the Declaration had been published. His argument was stated in the following manner:

Jefferson reached Philadelphia June 20, 1775, but returned to Virginia July 31; again reached Philadelphia October 1, but returned to Virginia December 27, 1775; and was once more

in Philadelphia from March 14 to September 2, 1776. The Declaration was written between June 11 and 28, 1776. Until the publication of "Common Sense" on January 9, 1776, Paine was an obscure person. From December 29, 1775 to May 13, 1776, both included, Jefferson and Paine obviously could not have met. They may have met between May 14 and June 28, but of this there is no proof.¹⁶

Matthews also introduced the fact that Thomas Jefferson had made his sentiments known about the slavery question months before Paine's arrival in America.¹⁷ Finally, the author noted that the works of "Jefferson, Franklin, Adams, Sherman and Livingston" had been searched for any clues that would support the evidence that Paine "had any share in the drafting of the Declaration, nor is there anything in Paine's own writing that gives color to the notion."¹⁸

In spite of this evidence presented by Albert Matthews, the biographer and freethinker, Joseph Lewis, elaborated the Conway thesis and published his book, Thomas Paine, Author of the Declaration of Independence in 1947. Freethinker Lewis declared that after carefully reading the works of Thomas Paine, he "made mental as well as written notes of the inescapable similarity between many of his statements in Common Sense and The Declaration of Independence."¹⁹ Lewis backed his thesis upon this similarity which, in his estimation, "existed not only in the ideas and sentiments but also in the actual words, construction of sentences, style of writing, composition, and rhythm of expression."²⁰ After presenting his evidence, Joseph Lewis concluded that Thomas Jefferson was not the author of the Declaration of Independence because he was convinced that he had copied the manuscript previously prepared by Thomas Paine. Therefore, all the credit, honor

and glory should go to the real author, Tom Paine.²¹ The Joseph Lewis novel was the last major argument of the Conway error.

Walter Phelps Hall in his book, British Radicalism, 1791-1792, devoted a few pages to a discussion of Thomas Paine and Rights of Man. Using Moncure Conway as his only reference source, Mr. Hall declared that Paine was the center and life of the radical movement as was Edmund Burke the heart and soul of the conservatives. Thomas Paine's Rights of Man, according to the author, "had a wider circulation and a more profound influence than any book issued in the radical cause."²² However, this pamphlet which created such a furor in England was "not ultra-radical."²³ Today, continued Hall, it would be considered conservative; yet, after its publication "certain good folk refused to open it."²⁴ Even that great champion, Charles James Fox, boasted that he had not read the second part of Rights of Man. His Whig comrades, out of respect for his opinion, destroyed their own copies of the pamphlet.²⁵ There was a great bitterness of spirit among many people against Paine and his latest work. In order to help explain this sarcastic attitude, Hall stated that Thomas Paine's marvelous writing style and his ability to write in the language of the common people aroused harsh criticism from the aristocracy.

After analyzing some of the theories stated by both Thomas Paine and Edmund Burke in their respective works on the subject of the French Revolution, Hall ended his discussion of Paine's influence by suggesting that another radical, Sir James Mackintosh, far "out-radicaled" Paine. Mackintosh, differing greatly from Paine, wasted no time in

appeals to antiquity to bolster his radical position. He was far more terse in his argument for he simply stated, in his outline of the radical position, that it was not a theoretical matter that certain abuses existed in Great Britain and they should be eradicated.²⁶

David S. Muzzey's essay, "Thomas Paine and American Independence," appeared in the American Review in the spring of 1926. Muzzey wrote of the great debt of gratitude America owes Thomas Paine and his pamphlets, Common Sense, Crises and Rights of Man. In his appraisal of Paine's major contributions, the author concluded that Paine had been instrumental in three areas: (1) In preparing the American mind for complete separation; (2) In encouraging the American forces and people to continue fighting in spite of their sufferings; (3) In justifying American independence through its beneficent influence upon the world at large.²⁷

British historian and lecturer at King's College in London, Professor Norman Sykes, wrote an extremely scholarly essay on Thomas Paine in a collection of his lectures in the book, Social and Political Ideas of Some Representative Thinkers of the Revolutionary Era.²⁸ In this essay Professor Sykes presented an excellent study of the background of eighteenth-century social and political thought. The most important contribution to Paine scholarship was that the author followed the development of natural religion and presented evidence for the importance of the concurrent growth of deism and democracy. Thomas Paine's political thought was profoundly influenced by his deism, in fact, Professor Sykes declared that the type of "interest which Paine

displayed in religion was therefore an essential part of his political thought" and, he continued, "its importance consists precisely in the circumstance that he was an almost perfect representative of the deist school."²⁹

Thomas Paine contributed to eighteenth-century thought, there was no question of that fact, stated Professor Sykes. In his conclusion the author declared the following thesis:

It was perhaps as inevitable as regrettable that the destructive and negative part of his political and religious writings should have impressed the imagination of contemporaries more powerfully than his constructive proposals and genuine zeal for social reform. . . . Admittedly also his historical knowledge was inadequate and his sense of the character of political organism too superficial to meet the philosophy of Burke. Yet apart from these shortcomings the political writings of Paine are of real importance. His individualism struck a new note in English political philosophy, as did also his concern for the condition of the people.³⁰

An avowed Marxist, V. F. Calverton, wrote an essay entitled, "Thomas Paine: God-Intoxicated Revolutionary," for Scribner's Magazine. In this article, Calverton commented on Paine's political and religious philosophy.

Calverton contended that Thomas Paine was influenced by the mechanistic philosophy of Julien Offray de La Mettrie. In fact, he continued, Paine "insisted upon carrying La Mettrie's anthropomorphic conclusions to their cosmic ultimate."³¹ Thomas Paine, however, differed from La Mettrie and his theory of determinism in that he "was willing to conceive of man as a mechanism, but like Voltaire, insisted upon the inclusion of God as 'the great mechanic.'"³²

V. F. Calverton never imparted his evidence for labeling Paine as being greatly influenced by La Mettrie's atheistic mechanism and determinism. No quotations from Paine's writings are used to support the author's thesis.

In describing the contributions of Thomas Paine to the birth of modern democracy, Calverton admitted that his appeal for the interests of the working classes was typical of middle class idealism at its height. Paine was a member of the middle class and in the process of protecting the lower classes, he acted in a manner "which was inevitable at the time, the progressive issues of the day being so inalienably bound up with the interests of the middle class, was to identify the cause of the middle class with that of humanity."³³

In his conclusion Mr. Calverton declared that:

To few men does the birth of modern democracy owe as much as to Thomas Paine. Paine infused it with the spirit of revolutionary idealism; those who came after him robbed it of that glow and turned it into the pawn of privilege.³⁴

In 1938 Chester C. Maxey's book, Political Philosophies, commented on Thomas Paine's political philosophy and his effect upon political thought in general.

In Maxey's eyes Thomas Paine was a genuine genius, a foremost crusader for the cause of liberty in the eighteenth century.³⁵

As a political theorist, Paine's major contribution, according to Maxey, was not to lead men "into new and unfamiliar ways of thought, but to dislodge the enemy on established and familiar ground."³⁶ Because of his literary talent, his ability to ram his ideas home, Thomas Paine through his writings profoundly influenced the society in which

he moved. Later his ideas aided in bringing about social and political reform in the nineteenth century.

Maxey defended Paine on the question of originality of thought. The author insisted that although it was difficult to locate the source of much of his knowledge, Paine, like Shakespeare, "borrowed unhesitatingly from every convenient source; but he was no slavish copyist." Indeed, Maxey continued, Paine "borrowed with rare discrimination, and imparted to what he borrowed qualities it did not originally possess."³⁷

One interesting comment that evolved from a discussion of Paine's view that social utility, as the only justification of the state, was the author's insistence that Paine was not "a utilitarian at all by their criteria."³⁸ However, it was his "persistent hammering home of the social utility doctrine" that accomplished much in preparing a welcome climate for Jeremy Bentham and Utilitarianism at a later date.³⁹

Finally, the author summarized Paine's contributions in helping to make political democracy a fact. Maxey stated that Thomas Paine "taught the masses to believe, as he believed, in democracy as the infallible producer of economic justice."⁴⁰ However, it is a pity that he did not foresee "the coming of an age of industrial autocracy in which political democracy alone would not be enough to guarantee the rights of man."⁴¹

V. E. Gibbens, of the Purdue University History Department, wrote a short article, "Tom Paine and the Idea of Progress," for the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography. The fourteen-page essay

was written as a reply to an earlier article by Miss Lois Whitney. It was Miss Whitney's conclusion in her book, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, that Thomas Paine was a primitivist who favored a return to nature. Miss Whitney made the following statement about Paine and his primitivist tendencies:

. . . but what one finds reveals the astonishing fact that Paine uses nearly everyone of the primitivistic presuppositions as a basis of a prophecy of unlimited progress. His panacea is the characteristic primitivistic one: go back to nature; study man in the earliest stages of his existence; find out the laws of nature; simplify!⁴²

Professor Gibbens attacked Miss Whitney's thesis by developing one of his own, simply that Paine was a zealous advocate of progress.

Professor Gibbens contended that Whitney selected only those passages in the Rights of Man that suited her position. By taking the quotations out of context she misunderstood what Thomas Paine had really said. In fact, Gibbens argued, Paine insisted on returning to nature for first principles only so that they might be applied "to one's thinking on political matters."⁴³

Dr. Gibbens maintained that Thomas Paine's advocacy of progress was very apparent when he considered "the possibilities of progressing to the goal of a league of nations."⁴⁴ He continued that Paine was acutely aware of the principle that the "wants of individuals in society have grown until they have become the wants of nations; and the nations can satisfy these wants only by cooperating with other nations."⁴⁵ This belief in national cooperation was certainly not an idea befitting a genuine primitivist, insisted the author. Thomas Paine was, in reality, a Progressivist who never advocated dispensing with government

but rather called for stringent governmental reform. The government could be and should be the tool and instrument used for improving conditions to benefit all concerned, contended the professor.

Dr. Gibben's thesis was completed with the following statement:

To recapitulate briefly the arguments advanced in this paper, Paine is shown, when his whole thought is carefully analyzed, to have no important primitivistic concepts. By accepting the advanced social, scientific, and political theory of the time, and being stimulated by his humanitarianism and the emotions aroused by the two great revolutions, he was wholeheartedly a believer in the idea of progress.⁴⁶

In the same April, 1942, issue of the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography when V. E. Gibben's article appeared, another essay that collaborated much of Gibben's thesis was also presented. The article, "The Significance of the Letter to the Abbé Raynal in the Progress of Thomas Paine's Thought," was written by Darrell Abel of South Dakota State College. Professor Abel viewed this particular letter as illustrating the progressive development of Paine's opinion when he ceased to think in narrow terms and began to think like an internationalist and universal humanitarian.

Professor Abel's premise was that the Letter to the Abbé Raynal represented "the earliest, and a substantially complete formulation of the author's internationalist views."⁴⁷ Before this time, Paine was "an internationalist in sentiment only," maintained Professor Abel.⁴⁸ However, after the Letter his conversion to larger political and social views was quite obvious. Professor Abel also suggested that the Rights of Man was an expanded version of the basic principles set forth in the Letter.

All the points outlined in the Letter were given a brilliant expansion in The Rights of Man, although little that was new in Paine's internationalist thinking was there introduced.⁴⁹

In his summary, Professor Abel again reaffirmed his position that the Letter to the Abbé Raynal showed a significant progress in Paine's thought toward internationalism. He restated his thesis to the effect that:

. . . there was a progress, if not a philosophy, in his opinions, and the Letter represents a significant stage in this progress. It shows Paine's political opinion at its fullest development, and many of the opinions expressed in it have vitality still.⁵⁰

Dr. Howard Penniman, a Professor of Government at Georgetown University, had published in the American Political Science Review an essay entitled, "Thomas Paine--Democrat."

Professor Penniman's objective in this essay was to analyze Thomas Paine's political theories as expounded in his Rights of Man. The various topics undertaken by Penniman illustrated his excellence in presenting an invaluable, scholarly assessment of Paine's political ideas. The topics discussed were "Popular Sovereignty," "Property Rights," "Majority Rule," "Equality," "Suffrage," "Constitutional Amending Processes," "Electing Legislative Members," and "Democracy and Deism."

After the analysis was completed, Professor Penniman came to the conclusion that Thomas Paine's political philosophy, as expressed in his later writings, fulfills all the requirements for his being considered a "majority-rule democrat."⁵¹

In 1943 T. V. Smith, a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Chicago, had a series of his college lectures published in the

textbook, The Philosophy of American Democracy. In this "judiciously sympathetic account," in the words of Harry H. Clark, Dr. Smith viewed Thomas Paine as a paragon of the revolutionary spirit. In his astute analysis of Paine's political philosophy, Smith suggested that the key to its comprehension was in its simplicity. He asserted his thesis in the following statement:

Paine's philosophy, as befits a revolutionary, is simple; but it is adequate to enable him to distinguish between society, a good permitting choices between goods, and government, an evil compelling choices between evils. Paine is, indeed, proud of the simplicity of his philosophy. He elevates its virtue into what he calls "a principle in nature"--a principle "which no art can overturn, viz. that the more simple anything is, the less liable it is to be disordered, and the easier repaired when disordered."⁵²

In describing Paine as a model revolutionary, Professor Smith added, "He is the true revolutionist . . . he who is long on ideas, short on habits, and pithy with impatience."⁵³ As to his contributions, Smith declared that Thomas Paine "invented little if anything ideological."⁵⁴ However, he did, continued the author, "turn to the account of action ideas of other men and the major increments of our cultural inheritance."⁵⁵ In other words, it may be stated that Paine's chief service was "prodding other men into action."⁵⁶

The basic elements expressed in the political philosophy of Thomas Paine, Professor Smith concluded, were the following principles to which he constantly referred throughout his writings: (1) The rights of man are natural in origin and moral in demand; (2) The monopoly of these rights are on one side, his side; (3) That the other side would always deny his side as having a monopoly of virtue; (4) Government exists as an essential, necessary evil.⁵⁷

An interesting additional comment made by Professor Smith was that although Thomas Paine was, without doubt, a model revolutionary, he simply could not compromise on anything and would have been a terrible legislator.

The historian, Dr. Felix Gilbert, in an article for the William and Mary Quarterly, produced an excellent discourse for the discussion of the background of the political situation in Philadelphia in 1775 and in what manner Thomas Paine was influenced by that environment. It was the author's contention that by the end of the summer of 1775 "circumstances had become such that a continuation of this policy of evasion was no longer possible."⁵⁸ It was within this environment that Thomas Paine composed his Common Sense. The "practical demands of this pamphlet suggest that he knew well what happened behind the closed doors of the Continental Congress."⁵⁹ Common Sense, Gilbert continued, contained a summary of all the radical arguments presented during the fall and winter of 1775. This first public call for complete separation from Great Britain was as though Paine had been requested by the radical forces to submit their program before the entire colonial community.⁶⁰

Dr. Gilbert, in full accord with the majority of scholars, stressed that Paine was not unique or original in his political theory. In fact, the author emphasized, he was greatly influenced by contemporary English thought, especially as expressed in the writings of David Hume and Joseph Priestley.⁶¹ At this point, Gilbert went so far as to declare that when considering the description of the emergence of a representative form of government . . .

Paine's passages are nothing but a paraphrase of Priestley's words; whoever reads the respective sections of the two books side by side will be inclined to assume that Paine wrote Common Sense with Priestley's pamphlet on his desk.⁶²

Thomas Paine was influenced by contemporary English radical thought in other matters as well, explained Dr. Gilbert. When considering his program on foreign policy, he "merely applied to America the ideas and concepts of the English controversy on the merits of "continental connections.'"⁶³

In his summarization of the chief services contributed by Thomas Paine to the American revolutionary cause, Dr. Gilbert concluded that "through him, the thoughts of others came to life; by the brilliancy of his style, they were transformed into a political weapon."⁶⁴ He added, the most effective feature of Paine's Common Sense was that it combined "the practical with the ideal, political advantage with moral duty."⁶⁵ Thus Paine, through Common Sense, stressed the fact that independence was not merely a practical gesture, but America's moral obligation to the world.⁶⁶

Harry Hayden Clark, in Representative Selections, devoted twenty-six pages in his "Introduction" to an analysis of Paine's political philosophy. Dr. Clark's main thesis which underlay his investigation was that evidence seemed "to show that his political theories grew out of his religious theories--his early Quakerism culminating in 'scientific' deism--and their moral and philosophical implications."⁶⁷

The topics that were discussed as fundamental to understanding Thomas Paine's political theory were as follows: (1) "Natural Altruism of the People"; (2) "The Social Compact"; (3) "Natural vs. Civil

Rights"; (4) "Anti-Traditionalism: Rational Principles and Progress"; (5) "Constitutions to Guarantee Representative Government"; (6) "Governmental Regularity to Promote the Good of All."⁶⁸

The final product resulting from Dr. Clark's study was a scholarly and succinct formulation of those common and distinctive ingredients that made up Thomas Paine's political philosophy. Ever present throughout the analysis, however, was Clark's basic premise that:

While Paine's political ideas were doubtless influenced by current events, economic conditions, and a wide variety of other things, it is important to remember that to a considerable extent these political ideas were logical deductions from his religious ideas. . . .⁶⁹

Dr. John J. Meng, a historian who held teaching and administrative positions at Hunter College and Fordham University, published an article, "The Constitutional Theories of Thomas Paine," in the Review of Politics in 1946.

This essay involved a discussion of Paine's theories in relation to the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776. Thomas Paine's constitutional theories were first published in a series entitled "A Serious Address to the People of Pennsylvania on the present situation of their affairs," which appeared in the Pennsylvania Packet in 1778.⁷⁰ Although none of the letters were signed, Dr. Meng unquestioningly associated them with the pen of Thomas Paine. Here, he explained, Paine delivered his sentiments "designed to prove that the existing constitution served the best interests of the state and that it should not be altered."⁷¹ These letters were the first public recording of Paine's ideas concerning the question of good government, its aims and procedures. Later on in life, Meng explained, his Rights of Man expressed a more mature, well-organized statement of his political beliefs.

Dr. Meng added nothing in his analysis that had not been covered many times before by other scholars. However, the evidence he presented, using these newly discovered letters to prove that Thomas Paine had already formulated his basic theories by 1778 on constitutionalism and the equality of human rights principle, was a valuable addition to Paine scholarship.

In 1951 Dr. Cecelia Kenyon of Smith College wrote an article, "Where Paine Went Wrong," for the American Political Science Review.

In the essay Dr. Kenyon developed the following thesis:

It was he, not the people of America, who failed to understand politics and who was therefore unable to devise means whereby the rights, of which both he and they had so noble a conception, might be permanently secured. This failure was the initial cause of his being rejected by his fellow Americans--a rejection begun long before he left this country in 1787. . . .⁷²

Here Dr. Kenyon made a point of declaring that, in her opinion, Thomas Paine's political theories were rejected long before his return to America in 1802. The American leaders went their own way and did not take Paine's advice after 1776, Kenyon explained. It was to their credit and a definite sign of their discrimination, she continued, that those leaders who worked to make "republican government a going concern took to their own counsel and not that of the national hero whose advice for independence they had taken rapidly and whole heartedly."⁷³ From 1776 to his death in 1809, Thomas Paine's influence was only minimal, because as far as the American people were concerned "in practical matters Paine could teach them nothing, for he was from the beginning and remained until the end, a novice in the politics of republicanism."⁷⁴

In Kenyon's opinion, Thomas Paine had a wonderful vision for a grand republic where the pursuit of happiness was open to all men. However, Dr. Kenyon contended, Paine was basically an idealist, a visionary and "a prophet rather than an effective leader, because he was incapable of bridging the gap between what was and what might be."⁷⁵

In discussing the Rights of Man and if Paine had developed a more realistic political approach during those intervening years in Europe, Dr. Kenyon stated that she was unable to see any evidence of it. She described her judgment by the following declaration:

It was rather the work of one who remained a genuine Peter Pan of the Age of Reason. From 1776 until 1809 Paine's political thought continued to be shaped by its genesis in opposition to monarchy and limited by his inability to gain in wisdom through mature observation.⁷⁶

In her conclusion Kenyon called Thomas Paine a typical European idealist who was unwilling or unable to compromise or study deeply the problems in political experience. The American statesmen were far more capable of knowing what form of government was best for them and they went their own way disregarding Thomas Paine's unrealistic advice.⁷⁷

Nelson F. Adkins edited a compilation of certain eighteenth-century political works in 1953. In his discussion of Thomas Paine, Adkins emphasized one particular feature about Thomas Paine, his humanitarianism. Along with his investigation of this distinctive characteristic, Adkins brought out what he considered the greatest mistakes Paine had made that contributed significantly to his loss of reputation and influence. First, Thomas Paine failed to see the importance of

tradition to the British populace. Consequently, his Rights of Man did not produce the revolution he wanted.⁷⁸ A second obstacle for Paine was his total ignorance of the French mind.⁷⁹ The third and most serious error, explained Nelson Adkins, was the Letter to George Washington. The original setting was ignited by the obvious enmity between Paine and Gouverneur Morris. In any case, the Letter "though penned in a mood of bitterness, sharply accentuated by ill health, was plainly the product of indiscretion and tactlessness."⁸⁰

In 1959 Professor Alfred Owen Aldridge contributed another essay on Thomas Paine. The article, "The Influence of Thomas Paine in the United States, England, France, Germany and South America," appeared in Comparative Literature. Dr. Aldridge stated his purpose was to trace the influence of Paine's "concepts of reason and liberty throughout the western world."⁸¹

Dr. Aldridge's research had led him to the discovery that Common Sense, Crisis and Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance, 1796, were all published outside of their national borders.

Common Sense had a tremendous circulation abroad and was translated in numerous languages. In Aldridge's opinion Common Sense "may have represented a greater single contribution to other nations than to the United States."⁸² The Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance was also translated and published throughout the western world. Dr. Aldridge maintained that this particular pamphlet was the most effective piece of propaganda on an international scale that Thomas Paine ever produced.⁸³

Though Thomas Paine considered himself a writer for the world at large, and there is substantial evidence to prove the accuracy of this declaration, Aldridge affirmed that "Paine literally intended his own writings as a platform for changing the political and religious conceptions of all humanity. . . ." ⁸⁴ It was not surprising, therefore, that several of his pamphlets received international attention.

In his conclusion Professor Aldridge presented Paine as a master propagandist. By quoting from sources contemporary to the period, Aldridge's case became quite clear and although this essay was a limited attempt to trace Paine's influence as an international literary figure, there was enough evidence presented "to show that the pen actually has the power to frighten investors and tumble thrones." ⁸⁵

Professor Ray B. Browne of Purdue University wrote a book entitled The Burke-Paine Controversy: Text and Criticism which was published in 1963. The study was designed to be used as a textbook for composition courses. However, it was the author's hope that some useful information might be gleaned for courses in American literature, history and social science. ⁸⁶

The study presented abridged texts of Edmund Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution and Thomas Paine's Rights of Man. Following the texts the second section of the book contained quotations from some immediate reactions to both Burke and Paine from people "who were neck deep in the events the two men were writing about." ⁸⁷ The third section consisted of twentieth-century comments taken from a variety of critics demonstrating the full range of American political philosophy.

An essay discussing the writing style of Burke and one on Paine were also included in Part III of the textbook.

The only observation made by the author that would add, perhaps, to Paine scholarship was the following comment made by Professor Browne concerning twentieth-century criticism:

It may be bewildering to see that Burke can be a god to one man, a devil to another; Paine, a monster to one, a benevolent sage to another; that Burke can be said to have founded the ultra-conservative right wing as well as American liberalism.⁸⁸

Another American scholar, Professor Strother B. Purdy of Marquette University, displayed interest in the Burke-Paine question. In 1967 he wrote an article, "A Note on the Burke-Paine Controversy," for American Literature.

The purpose of this three-page "Note" was to attack the accuracy of Moncure D. Conway's assertion that Thomas Paine quoted Edmund Burke in a fair and honest manner and in no way misrepresented Burke's opinion. In Professor Purdy's judgment "a close reading of The Rights of Man alongside of the Reflections on the Revolution in France reveals something to the contrary."⁸⁹

Dr. Purdy contended that Paine took a certain passage from Burke's Reflections and misquoted it. The sentence itself was in the form of a question, Thomas Paine made it a statement, having excluded the question mark from the end of the sentence. By so doing the complete meaning was changed and Paine then attacked what he labeled as Edmund Burke's obvious subservience to authority.⁹⁰ This attack by Paine, Purdy continued, was a "palpable hit, but a totally false and

unjustified one."⁹¹ In fact, Purdy explains, Paine, "by misquoting, and making a question into a statement, has simply made Burke say the opposite of what he really said."⁹²

In his conclusion Dr. Purdy remarked that the error was still evident and the 1963 textbook, The Burke-Paine Controversy: Text and Criticism by Ray Browne, proved that Paine's misquotation was "becoming a part of the general American view of Burke, if not the historical record."⁹³ Purdy ended his "Note" with the remark that he hoped it was "not too late to try to straighten out the question of who had principles."⁹⁴ With a closing warning Dr. Purdy suggested that "it can be said for Paine that he wrote The Rights in feverish haste, but perhaps it is better not to read it in the same fashion."⁹⁵

One of the foremost contributors to Paine scholarship, Professor Alfred Owen Aldridge, published in 1971 another essay about Thomas Paine. "Thomas Paine, Edmund Burke and Anglo-French Relations in 1787" was issued in the Studies in Burke and His Time series. In this particular study Aldridge contended that one of Thomas Paine's most important doctrines, the existence of a kinship or solidarity between the peoples of England and France, had been specified earlier in a letter to an unnamed high official of the French court.⁹⁶ Thomas Paine endeavored through this letter to arrange a peaceful concord between the two nations. Later, Paine used the same arguments in an unsuccessful effort to persuade Edmund Burke to join him in defending the new revolutionary regime in France.⁹⁷

Concerning the letter itself, Professor Aldridge maintained that biographers of Paine were mistaken in their assumption that Paine's

close relationship had been with the Cardinal de Brienne when, in fact, it had been with the Cardinal's secretary, the Abbé André Morellet.

In his summary Aldridge asserted that although Thomas Paine had honestly endeavored to impress upon his friend, Edmund Burke, the legitimacy of the new French regime,⁹⁸ he was obviously ineffectual in changing Burke's opinion. Actually, Aldridge maintained, "between 1787 and 1790 neither Paine nor Burke had changed his basic principles, but exterior events forced them into opposite camps."⁹⁹

Paul K. Conkin, Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin, made a few comments about Thomas Paine in his book, Self-Evident Truths. He stated that most of the leaders of the American revolutionary movement did not agree with Paine's political philosophy as he expressed it in his pamphlet, Common Sense. Professor Conkin maintained the following was the actual case:

Thomas Paine, in his Common Sense pamphlets, launched the first brutal attack upon the British form of government and upon the idea of a mixed constitution. He ridiculed both monarch and lords, and recommended a simple, single assembly with a revolving presidency. His proposals, so shockingly naive to one like John Adams, won at least local support and had a direct influence on the Pennsylvania constitution of 1776. But except for Franklin, few of the leaders of the revolutionary movement accepted Paine's heresy.¹⁰⁰

Professor Conkin made one other reference to Thomas Paine and this concerned the idea of democracy in the American colonial mind. He expressed his opinion in the following statement:

In America the word democracy rarely suggested the radical views of a Thomas Paine or any widespread desire to abolish either internal checks on the popular will or nonrepresentative branches like the courts.¹⁰¹

It would seem appropriate at this time to present two other points of view of Paine's contemporaries, one from an American colonial, Colonel Landon Carter, and the other from an Englishman, Edward Thornton, on his impressions of America, written during his travels from 1791 to 1793. In both instances the men were not impressed with Thomas Paine's efforts as a political analyst and propagandist.

Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall wrote in his diary the following observations about the pamphlet, Common Sense, and its support:

Therefore, I have always wondered at the prodigious rash Praise which have given to that most nonsensical of all Pamphlets, Common Sense, in which I could not deduce one just Sentiment, according to any Sense whatever. From whence I still conclude that the support which it has met with must have been through a latent desire in every body that has contemned it, to be as arbitrary as possible; and they have therefore resolved to run every risk rather than not indulge this innate disposition to rule.¹⁰²

A young English gentleman, Edward Thornton, while traveling in America during the 1790's, had much to say about his impressions of Thomas Paine, who, at the time, was abroad on the Continent.

In a letter to his friend, James Bland Burges, back in England, he first mentioned Thomas Paine and Part One of the Rights of Man on October 31, 1791.

It is not true as we have been brought to imagine that the doctrines of Mr. Paine's book are echoed and asserted to one end of the continent to the other, on the contrary, the man and the book are execrated by the best and most temperate people in the country, and they are a great party too, which has not always been the case with the optimi.¹⁰³

Young Mr. Thornton, in another letter to friend Burges on July 25, 1792, discussed the obvious sophistry of Paine's Rights of Man.

I hope England will take no active part in the affairs of the continent, and as for its internal tranquility, the King's proclamation which I take to be a preliminary to the apprehension of Payne will I hope frighten that incendiary into silence or flight. If there exists in England a man of liberal education and with the manners of a gentleman, who can have been seduced by the sophistry of "The Rights of Man," I would engage for his cure by a visit to America, no where the doctrine has been carried out into modern age practice: for the Americans, though sometimes absurd on these points, are in the main a sensible and reasonable people, and in the best parts of the country, the respect for public offices and public characters, the true foundation and the only permanent support of aristocracy is carried to a higher point than in more monarchical countries.¹⁰⁴

The comments and criticism of Thomas Paine's political philosophy have been greatly diversified in tone, content and attitude. It is important to note that the vast majority of critics who have endeavored to analyze Paine's political theory, its development, characteristics and influence, have been members of academic circles. Historians, social scientists and scholars in the field of American and English literature constitute the critics who have attempted to study in depth the characteristics, both common and peculiar, of the political theory as expressed in Common Sense, Rights of Man and other Paine polemics.

Although these same scholars strive toward objectivity in their analyses, the variety of interpretation extends from pole to pole. There is one common denominator, however. No matter whether the critic acknowledges or disagrees on the question of creativity or originality in Paine's political thought, he will agree that the major factor that produced the far-reaching impression and reaction, positive or negative in nature, in his pamphlets is the dramatic, vivid style and

and language in which they were written. Therefore, the power of Thomas Paine's political thought was not so much in what he said, but in how he said it.

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CHAPTER IX

NEMESIS AND ANATHEMA: CRITICISM OF THOMAS
PAINE'S RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

Thomas Paine was neither an atheist nor an agnostic. His religious beliefs, although unorthodox and anti-Christian in nature, were clearly discernible in his personal profession of faith as recorded in two of his works, The Age of Reason and The Existence of God.

I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy.

But, lest it should be supposed that I believe many other things in addition to these, I shall, in the progress of this work declare the things I do not believe, and my reasons for not believing them.

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish Church, by the Roman Church, by the Greek Church, by the Turkish Church, by the Protestant Church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church.

All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.

I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who believe otherwise; they have the same right to their belief as I have to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing, or in disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what he does not believe.¹

Paine's firm conviction that true religion had two principal enemies, fanaticism and atheism and that they might be combated by reason, morality and natural philosophy was best expressed in the introduction of his discourse, addressed to the Society of Theophilanthropists in Paris, entitled The Existence of God.

The existence of a God is the first dogma of the Theophilanthropists. It is upon this subject that I solicit your attention; for though it has been often treated of, and that most sublimely, the subject is inexhaustible; and there will always remain something to be said that has not been before advanced. I go therefore to open the subject, and to crave your attention to the end.

The universe is the bible of a true Theophilanthropist. It is there that he reads of God. It is there that the proofs of His existence are to be sought and to be found. As to written or printed books, by whatever name they are called, they are the works of man's hands, and carry no evidence in themselves that God is the Author of any of them. It must be in something that man could not make that we must seek evidence for our belief, and that something is the universe, the true Bible--the inimitable work of God.

Contemplating the universe, the whole system of Creation, in this point of light, we shall discover, that all that which is called natural philosophy is properly a divine study. It is the study of God through His works. It is the best study, by which we can arrive at a knowledge of His existence, and the only one by which we can gain a glimpse of His perfection.²

Thomas Paine's profession of faith would not go unchallenged, and years later one of his former comrades in professing the cause of the American Revolution made the following caustic remarks:

I am willing you should call this the Age of Frivolity as you do; and would not object if you named it the Age of Folly, Vice, Frenzy, Fury, Brutality, Daemons, Buonaparte, Tom Paine, or the Age of the Burning Brand from the Bottomless Pitt; or any thing but the Age of Reason. I know not whether any Man in the World has had more influence on its inhabitants or affairs for the last thirty years than Tom Paine. There can be no severer Satyr on the Age. For such a mongrel between Pigg and Puppy, begotten by a wild Boar or a Bitch Wolf, never before in any Age of the World has suffered by the Poltroonery of mankind, to run through such a career of Mischief. Call it then the Age of Paine. He deserves it much more, than the Courtezan who was consecrated to represent the Goddess [of Reason] in the Temple in Paris, and whose name, Tom has given to the Age. The real intellectual faculty has nothing to do with the Age, the Strumpet or Tom.³

This comment, written on October 29, 1805, at his estate in Quincy, Massachusetts, was the expressed opinion of John Adams as he pondered the past, the great writers and issues for his Autobiography. He was not alone in his emotional reflection, for the statements he made were typical of Federalist sentiment at the time.

The question might be raised, what did Thomas Paine do to provoke such a violent reaction from many people in his adopted country? The answer was simply that he had published, in 1794, a treatise on his religious views concerning the Bible as God's revealed word and Christianity. This book, purposed to test the Scriptures and Christianity in the light of reason, was called The Age of Reason.

It should not have been surprising to anyone who knew Thomas Paine or his writing that such a book would eventually be penned by his hand. His belief in the absolute power and perfectibility of human reason and firm adherence to the tenets of "natural" religion permitted no acceptance or belief in the supernatural. All things miraculous were unacceptable because such faith was indicative of irrational thought, contrary to logic and common sense. The biographer, W. E. Woodward, expressed Paine's absolute confidence in human reason in this way:

Tom Paine accepted absolutely nothing on faith. He did not possess an atom of respect for tradition or anything that it implied. He was a logician by temperament and daily practice; his mental life was a never-ending search for the why and wherefore of everything. He had no use for any institution or system of society that did not fit into the domain of reason.⁴

Thomas Paine's purpose in writing Part One of his religious treatise was a fervent plea for the French to realize that they "were

running headlong into atheism," and he attempted "to stop them in that career."⁵ He was fearful that "lest in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government and false theology," they might also lose "sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true."⁶ With this sacred task before him, Paine wrote the first part of his Age of Reason.

Thomas Paine's biographers and critics are of one accord in their belief that his Age of Reason produced a tremendous reaction in England and America. However, from this point on there are as many interpretations of the reasons behind the sensational response this particular work received as there are interpreters and analysts. In the midst of this plethora of individualistic opinion two schools of thought, nevertheless, seem to evolve. The majority of critics favor the opinion that the Age of Reason is the main instrument that lost Paine his reputation, and thus ended his effectiveness as a social and political propagandist. The minority opinion stresses the belief that the Age of Reason is merely an extension of Paine's political philosophy into the realm of theological criticism. In essence, the Age of Reason "is an application of the Rights of Man."⁷ If his reputation suffered and his influence was curtailed or halted altogether, it was due to the anger and resentment already amassed in condemnation against Rights of Man. The damage had already been accomplished and Age of Reason simply accentuated the problems and provided more nails for the coffin of Paine's former popularity. The biographer, Frank Smith, and critic, R. R. Palmer, would add at this point that

Tom Paine's greatest sin was in his addressing himself to the common people, not to the intelligencia, thus he exposed to common view those deistical tenets "so familiar to the upper classes for more than a generation."⁸ This kind of sacrilege would not be excused or forgotten quickly because Paine had transformed deism "from an aristocratic intellectual sport into a popular movement."⁹

Michael L. Lasser, instructor at the Harley School in Rochester, New York, investigated the number of published replies that appeared in reaction to Thomas Paine's Age of Reason. His research located thirty-seven separate responses covering the period from 1794 to 1799. Some of the attacks were in article form, only a few pages in length; however, one lengthy account ran into numerous printings.

The single most popular and effective attack against Age of Reason was penned by Richard Watson, the Bishop of Llandaff. His Apology for the Bible received twelve printings in England alone. It was also published in the United States and later appeared in a French and a Greek edition.¹⁰

Richard Watson began his Apology with a salutation conceding that the Age of Reason was an extraordinary performance. Having found "little or no novelty" in the objections against revealed religion presented by Thomas Paine, Dr. Watson remarked about Paine's obvious zeal and sincerity in disseminating his opinions. He ended his salutation with the personal note: "I must be allowed to lament, that these talents have not been applied in a manner more useful to human kind, and more creditable to yourself."¹¹

The Bishop proceeded to decry the future harm that would ultimately issue from the Age of Reason:

In accomplishing your purpose, you will have unsettled the faith of thousands; rooted from the minds of the unhappy virtuous all their comfortable assurance of a future recompense: have annihilated in the minds of the flagitious all their fears of future punishment; you will have given the reins to the domination of every passion, and have thereby contributed to the introduction of the public insecurity, and of the private unhappiness, usually and almost necessarily accompanying a state of corrupted morals.¹²

The moral argument was the determined strong point purposed by the Bishop and he revived the reasoning and rhetoric of Bishop Joseph Butler to refute the deist position.¹³ By using the Butler argument and constant referral to Paine's misunderstanding of Scripture, Watson continued his rebuttal and ended with the wish that Paine might "become a partaker of that faith in revealed religion. . . ."¹⁴

Vernon L. Parrington, in his Colonial Mind, spoke of this particular response by the Bishop of Llandaff. Since Paine's Age of Reason and the works of other men of "irreligious spirit" found entrance into such strongholds of orthodox Christianity as Harvard College, "a copy of Watson's Apology for the Bible was presented to every Harvard undergraduate. . . ."¹⁵

This serious and distinguished reply has been accepted by theologians as the principle, standard apology to Paine's Age of Reason.¹⁶ Moncure D. Conway wrote that he considered the Watson treatment as representative of the rest of the "answers" to Thomas Paine's work. It was his contention, also, that this Apology, along with all the other replies, never in the strictest sense answered Paine. In fact, Conway

maintained that the Bishop offered more of a capitulation, having made "particular and direct concessions" in his reply.¹⁷ Conway proceeded to enumerate nine specific points within Watson's Apology that he considered direct concessions and added that there were "other admissions in his silence and evasions."¹⁸

The Bishop's Apology oftentimes had strange results. One of the consequences from many calls for copies of the Apology was that many were actually converted over to Paine's tenets. Bishop Watson had filled his reply with direct quotations from the Age of Reason and, as it circulated throughout all levels of English society, those who had never been previously exposed "came into direct contact with Paine, and as a result many accepted his principles."¹⁹

Before leaving the discussion of this principal response, it must be noted that this was the only reply to which Thomas Paine himself responded in print.

One of the American replies to the Age of Reason was written by the Reverend Uzal Ogden, rector of Trinity Church in Newark, New Jersey. In his Antidote to Deism or the Deists Unmasked, which was dedicated to President George Washington, the Reverend Ogden attested his purpose to be "a general defense of divine revelation, against the attacks of deists of every description . . ." and to illustrate and establish the most important doctrines of the gospel.²⁰

Some of the topics he covered in his first section were as follows" (1) "Various probable reasons which induced Mr. Paine to write his age of reason"; (2) "Libertine conduct and conceit of deists";

(3) "The effects of deism in France": (4) "Mr. Paine's book devoid of reason"; (5) "Mr. Paine insults the understanding of Americans"; (6) "Christianity only capable of promoting the present and future happiness of men"; (7) "Deists enemies to mankind."²¹

The Reverend Ogden called Paine's belief concise but imperfect and inferior to other deistical creeds "particularly the system of deism, embraced and published by Lord Herbert, more than a year ago."²²

In his effort to refute Thomas Paine's basic tenets, Ogden supplied quotations from Aristotle, John Wesley, the great church apologists and even included Niccolo Machiavelli's statement of his faith in God and divine revelation.²³

The second section of the discourse was devoted exclusively to a refutation of the Age of Reason, illustrating discrepancies in Thomas Paine's understanding of the Scriptures. The author used a variety of sources to bolster his position in this section as well, with the result that it read like a textbook in systematic theology.

The Reverend Uzal Ogden concluded his apology with a letter written on June 19, 1680, by John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, who renounced his deism and embraced Christianity.²⁴

A Doctor of Divinity and minister of the Presbyterian Church in Alexandria, Virginia, James Muir, published his own refutation to the Age of Reason in 1795. In a series of ten discourses Dr. Muir discussed Biblical inspiration. His purpose was not to produce a page by page disputation of the Age but to promote the truth. In his own words he stated, "to oppose scorn with scorn, appears to me very improper on so serious a subject. I lay down certain principles, and shew how these may be applied."²⁵

An enormous amount of Bible exposition was contained in this series of discourses. In his effort to reach those who might have been swayed by Paine's tenets, he closed his "Discourse Number Nine" with a short address to unbelievers and those who were not yet fully established in the Christian faith.

The last three pages of "Discourse Number Ten" were devoted to prayers and warnings to America. His final remarks were in the form of a prayer recorded as follows:

There is hope wherever a spirit of grace and supplication is found. I am persuaded there are many in this land who fear God. Let them with one heart, and one voice, bewail the national guilt under which this country groans. Let them deprecate the judgments which are now upon us. Let them discover a greater love for one another, a great attention to God as a Spirit, worshipping him in spirit and truth. Let them herewith prove him whether he will not pour out upon them a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it; whether he will not rebuke the devourer for their sakes. "All nations shall call America blessed; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts."²⁶

In 1820 a volume of rather poorly written poetry was published in England. The title of this volume was Portraits in blank verse of Persons in Public and Private Life, Real and Caricatured with a few Fictitious Ones. The poet was a Matthew Bramble, evidently an unknown author who produced no other work than this particular volume.

In Mr. Bramble's attempt at poetic portraiture, he placed two of his subjects within a single frame. Here John Wesley and Thomas Paine were shown side by side. This Portraiture Number Fifteen was entitled "The Christian Preacher and Infidel Contrasted." In one hundred and twenty lines Matthew Bramble "garlands the memory of John Wesley and desecrates the ignominious bones of Tom Paine's humanism."²⁷

In a few lines the author portrayed Paine in the following descriptive words:

So taught not worthless Tom; he taught, man liv'd
A pig, and died a pig--a grov'ling, sensual,
Mercenary thing; possessing little here,
And naught hereafter.
May God impede the increase of such reptiles,
And in his fiat, influence all the world,
To live each hour, as they would wish to die.²⁸

It would be difficult to analyze why the author would contrast these two particular men with as little in common as they possessed. However, there was one similarity in their legacy, for "societies" had been formed in reverence to their memory. Another fact to be considered was that by 1820, when this book was published, "Tom Paine Societies" were being founded all over England and presented "a source for concern and challenge to Methodists in some parts of England, for instance in East Anglia."²⁹

The researcher, George Lawton, who rediscovered the Bramble volume, ended his discussion with a provocative note. It was highly possible that Matthew Bramble was a pseudonym for a man of Quaker persuasion. If this was the case, the Tom Paine societies would not have been threatened and the "Methodists would simply be pleased that a quondam Quaker had avowed such admiration for their founder."³⁰

John W. Chadwick, minister of the Second Unitarian Society of Brooklyn, New York, had a series of his sermons published in 1877. One of the sermons discussed Thomas Paine and the Age of Reason. In his estimation, the real strength of the pamphlet lay in its concise argument against the possibility of a printed revelation, "and in its feeling of the religiousness of science, and its announcement that all natural science is inevitably theological."³¹

Basically, Chadwick developed his own interpretation of the Bible as merely a human work of poetry and beauty, full of virtue and morality around Thomas Paine's arguments as expressed in his Age of Reason. He gave his thesis in the following statement:

The Bible, as conceived by modern critical science, is a mighty treasure-house of evidences of the nature of religious evolution. As such, of all ancient scriptures it is the most precious. There is nowhere else so much dignity and elevation, so much poetry and beauty, and such an all-pervading sense that righteousness is the one essential thing.³²

The Chadwick discourse is important in one sense in that it presents a good example of nineteenth-century Unitarian opinion concerning the Bible as a divinely inspired work. Thomas Paine and his religious treatise play a role in that they become a tool to be used to expedite Unitarian theological criticism.

George Lippard presented an address before the Philadelphia Institute on January 25, 1852. In this speech, later published in a pamphlet form, Lippard acknowledged America's debt to Thomas Paine. His purpose was to point out Paine's virtues, his genuine contribution to the revolutionary cause in writing Common Sense and Crisis. He added that Paine should not be condemned because of his obvious error in writing the Age of Reason. This religious pamphlet, in his opinion, was indicative of misjudgment on Paine's part because he was simply incapable of understanding true Christianity and mistook the evil committed in the name of Jesus Christ for sin within Christianity itself.³³

Lippard made it quite clear that Christianity would never die from the words of a Voltaire or a Paine. Christianity was not to be

"undermined by a sneer or crushed by a falsehood" or wounded unto death by a slander "received from pretended friends during a course of eighteen hundred years."³⁴

In his summary the author concluded that there was a great lesson to be learned from Thomas Paine's life. "A great man, when he utters a great truth, raises himself to the dignity of an angel," however, Lippard continued, "the same man uttering a lie degrades himself below the beast."³⁵ Therefore, Thomas Paine should be honored for he uttered a great truth when he wrote Common Sense, but when he wrote the Age of Reason, a direct contradiction of his former work, Common Sense, he must be pitied.³⁶

One of the earliest and best sources for a critical perception and insight into Thomas Paine's deism can be found in I. Woodbridge Riley's book, American Philosophy: The Early Schools. It was Riley's opinion that Age of Reason contained no original material other than a phrase or two. Everything that Thomas Paine presented was a repeat of what other English freethinkers had said throughout the Georgian era. Basically, what Thomas Paine accomplished was to repeat in common language the arguments of far greater thinkers than himself. In other words, his work was merely a reflection of current deism.³⁷

As to the effects of the Age of Reason on the community at large, Riley maintained that the "clergy attacked it, the colleges criticized it, and the populace grew sick of it."³⁸ He added, nevertheless, this did not happen before the book "had enjoyed a decided run of popularity."³⁹

Ernest C. Moses wrote an article, "Was Thomas Paine Infidel at Heart?" which appeared in Americana in 1912. He praised Thomas Paine for his courage, his intelligence and his service to the American Revolution. However, when Paine left the area of political philosophy and entered into theological criticism he made a serious error in judgment. His glaring fault was then revealed to the world. Moses explained Paine's error in the following statement:

The one glaring fault of Thomas Paine was an intemperate radicalism. His attitude toward established institutions of his day was often expressed in premature declarations which did not fit the times nor the temper of the people. It was his habit to unwisely push certain propositions in the realm of moral beliefs onto the public thought before the people were in any measure ready to receive or accept them.⁴⁰

Like George Lippard, Ernest Moses commended Thomas Paine for his service to the American revolutionary cause and his contribution to political theory, however he, without question possessed no true understanding of the religious temperament of his day.

Elizabeth S. Kite in her essay, "The Revival of Thomas Paine," attempted to illustrate her thesis that Paine's contributions to the world in which we live were "destructive rather than constructive."⁴¹

When discussing his Age of Reason, Ms. Kite maintained that one has a classic example of his destructive services. In her estimation, "the most obvious thing about Paine is that he helped clear the way in Protestant countries for the triumphant return of the Catholic Church."⁴² He succeeded in accomplishing this feat by shattering the Protestant foundation that the faith in the Bible was sufficient for personal salvation "without respect to authoritative interpretation of its texts."⁴³

Because Paine's Age of Reason was cheap, plentiful and could be found in the most obscure corners, the Protestant world was sown with its destructive seeds.⁴⁴ However, the pamphlet never became popular in Catholic countries, nor would it have impressed or influenced those countries anymore than it had the French because the Catholic Church had always held "that the Bible is not a suitable book to be put without safeguards into the hands of everybody."⁴⁵

Elizabeth Kite concluded her two-page essay by suggesting that other than Crisis Number One, where he actually contributed positively, Thomas Paine's services were basically destructive and negative in results.⁴⁶

Walter Marshall Horton discussed the question of eighteenth-century theism, deism and mysticism in his book, Theism and the Scientific Spirit. To Horton, Thomas Paine was a man of the Newtonian age who quickly made the necessary adjustments to the new scientific theories as they became known to him.

The author's thesis concerned the various ways by which sincere men "living in the same period, with the same influences playing upon them, made the necessary adjustments between the scientific and religious spirit."⁴⁷ Isaac Newton, the scientist and theologian, Thomas Paine, the typical deist, and Emanuel Swedenborg, the typical mystic, were then contrasted as to how their religion influenced their scientific theory. The final result showed Paine to be the typical deist who was able to compress his religion into the mold which the sciences of the period required. Thus his conception of God was as an "Almighty Lecturer" and

"Great Mechanic," who created the heavens "as a demonstration of the principles of mechanics on which human welfare and progress depend."⁴⁸

In 1933 Harry Hayden Clark's essay, "An Historical Interpretation of Thomas Paine's Religion," was published. This outstanding Paine authority maintained that one must thoroughly understand Thomas Paine's religious views before comprehending the total man, his political and social philosophy. While Quakerism helped to mold his mind, much of it negatively, it was the positive force of scientific deism that inspired him and profoundly influenced his political, religious, social and educational theory. He was a pure deist of the Newtonian school, stated Professor Clark.⁴⁹

In discussing the major constructive tenets of Thomas Paine's religious thought, Clark suggested there were basically four in number:

The major premises involve the belief (a) that nature, in the eye of rationalistic science, is a divine revelation; (b) that such a study will reveal a "harmonious, magnificent order, that nature . . . is law"; (c) that the natural man shares the divine benevolence and that in this harmonious order his "wants, acting upon every individual, impel the whole of them into society, as naturally as gravitation acts to a center"; (d) and that an attempt to reestablish in politics and religion a lost harmony with this uniform, immutable, universal, and eternal law and order, and to modify or overthrow whatever traditional institutions have obscured this order and thrown its natural harmony into discord, will constitute progress, will radically decrease human misery, and will rapidly usher in "the birthday of a new world."⁵⁰

The remainder of the essay was devoted to illustrating how these basic religious premises can be easily detected throughout Thomas Paine's writings.

While rummaging through some old books and manuscripts in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, the Curator, Robert O. Schad,

discovered a rare copy of the Reverend Edward Nares' study, An Attempt to Shew How Far the Philosophical Notion of a Plurality of Worlds Is consistent, or not so, with the Language of the Holy Scriptures. This 1801 treatise attacked a perennial problem which the "new astronomy" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had made acute. Thomas Paine's Age of Reason had aided in the eruption of this classic conflict between faith and reason, reason and revelation.⁵¹

An educator and historian, Dr. Marjorie Nicolson, whose attention was called to the rare copy by the Curator of Rare Books, Mr. Schad, published a fully documented study of the Reverend Nares' refutation of the "plurality of worlds" thesis within Thomas Paine's Age of Reason.

Dr. Nicolson maintained that Thomas Paine's attempt to destroy the Scriptures as divinely revealed and establish the natural religion of deism was not original in any sense. Although what he presented in Age of Reason was considered irreverent and blasphemous to the orthodox, to Paine and many others, "it was a logical and inevitable conclusion from indisputable scientific premises."⁵² Paine said nothing, Nicolson continued, "which had not been said before, but the time was ripe, the audience unconsciously ready."⁵³

After a discussion of some of the replies to Paine's Age of Reason, Dr. Nicolson described the approach taken by the Reverend Doctor Edward Nares. Greatly differing in attitude from other contemporary responses, the Nares reply was not invective, but was rather "curiously dispassionate and objective," showing a real respect for the deistic religion.⁵⁴

Dr. Nares treated three main themes in his effort to prove the logical inconsistency of deistic principles. The themes were: "the conception of the plurality of worlds, the nature of God, and the mediation of Christ."⁵⁵

The Reverend Nares, a product of his scientific age, pursued the dream of Thomas Aquinas and attempted "to reconcile the new authority of astronomy with the old authority of revelation."⁵⁶ The conclusion he reached was that "the philosophical notion of a plurality of worlds is consistent . . . with the language of the Holy Scripture," and above all, "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."⁵⁷

Professor Robert Falk, a scholar in the field of American literature, published a valuable article, "Thomas Paine: Deist or Quaker," in the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography in 1938. He attempted, as did Harry H. Clark and Norman Sykes, to discredit the Conway thesis that Thomas Paine was understandable only through the light of his theocratic Quakerism.

In the essay Professor Falk defined the basic tenets of both the Quaker faith and deism. In his opinion, it was clear that Quakerism was basically mystical and nonsensory in nature and was "quite the opposite of Paine's conception of Reason."⁵⁸ The Quaker emphasis upon the indwelling Holy Spirit or "inner light" as the perfecter and reformer of the inward being was in direct contrast to Paine, who viewed reform as being external, to be aimed at the destruction of evil political and religious institutions. However, Falk would not discard the idea that there "was none of the Quaker spirit in Paine."⁵⁹ Thomas Paine did not

accept Quakerism as his religion, concluded Professor Falk, but "there was much in his social views" which reflected "his contact and sympathy with the Society of Friends."⁶⁰

Robert Falk in another essay, "Thomas Paine and the Attitude of the Quakers to the American Revolution," measured the relationship between Paine and the American Quakers during the Revolutionary War.

Basically, the essay was a continuation of the conclusions reached in his previous study, that Thomas Paine was a deist, not a Quaker.

Professor Falk, in a fully documented and convincing approach, reached the following conclusion in regard to Thomas Paine and Quaker influences during the American Revolution:

Our conclusion, then as regards the Quaker influence, in the political sphere, on the colonies during the war may be threefold. First, the Quaker effort, insofar as it can be called such, was against rather than for the American cause. Second, Thomas Paine, far from being sympathetic with the Quaker point of view, was quite on the opposite side. And third, the French enthusiasm for Quaker ideals had slight effect on the practical politics of the Quakers this side of the Atlantic.⁶¹

The Reverend Francis John McConnell, a Methodist theologian, devoted over thirty pages of his book, Evangelicals, Revolutionists and Idealists: Six English Contributors to American Thought and Action, to a discussion of Thomas Paine and his influence on American thought. The Reverend McConnell complimented Paine in that "although he cannot be considered an original thinker on religious themes," he possessed the remarkable gift of "getting his ideas into the minds of the masses to a larger measure than any other man of his time."⁶²

The author constantly referred to the fact that Thomas Paine was never an atheist, instead was an enemy of atheism.

In evaluating the Age of Reason as a theological document, the Reverend McConnell made the following comments:

His treatment was wooden and mechanical. There is hardly any trace of what one would call either artistic or spiritual discernment. The sublimest passages of Job meant nothing; the Psalms meant nothing; the prayers of course meant nothing; and religious insight was out of the question.⁶³

The main problem associated with Thomas Paine's religious and political philosophy was, concluded McConnell, its obvious inadequacy. For instance, he was an advocate of the "bad men of history" theory that all social institutions were the creations of men for their personal exploitative purposes. Therefore, any religious institution was merely a tool in the hands of the priests who pretended to have supernatural knowledge and made slaves of the believers.⁶⁴ This same line of reasoning infiltrated his political theory as well, maintained the Reverend, and caused him to lose influence because his ideas were not practical enough for the American situation.

A fairly recent and stimulating study of the freethinking movement was published in 1961. The Infidel: Freethought and American Religion was written by an ordained minister who holds a Ph.D. in American religious and intellectual history from the University of Chicago. Martin E. Marty in his book endeavored to trace the importance of "infidelity" in American religious thought. The infidel was most beneficial, maintained Dr. Marty, because he forced the theologians to stand and give evidence of their faith and examine important social and theological questions.

The Age of Reason and its author, Thomas Paine, had a prominent role in the first phase of infidelity in America. Dr. Marty explained the function of Paine and his religious treatise and where they fit in the chronology of the infidelity movement:

The infidels were at a disadvantage. Their picture as painted by their rivals showed them mighty, monolithic, and militant. Militant they were, but their might was only a false impression created by the fact that they caught the churches in a moment of embarrassment. Their movement was restricted chronologically, numerically, and in influence. Chronologically it begins symbolically in 1788 and ends with the decline of Palmer and Paine and the death of Paine in 1809. The decade following publication of The Age of Reason in 1794 saw the climax of the onslaught against the churches; the Second Great Awakening at the turn of the century helped end it. Scattered traces of anti-ecclesiastical rationalism appeared before this time but were largely confined to the libraries of genteel skeptics. After 1809 devotees of freethought were scattered or else they found respectable forums in liberal religion. To extend the first even to this date one must allow for the part clergymen who were utilizing infidelity played in creating the illusion of its longer past and its present persistence.⁶⁵

In the author's opinion Thomas Paine was the major figure among the declared infidels of his era. Upon returning to America in 1802, his name was familiar to statesmen and schoolboys alike. By the end of the eighteenth century, maintained Marty, Thomas Paine had become the symbol of infidelity in America. Moreover, he was living up to his European reputation by joining other avowed critics like Elihu Palmer on freethought platforms in attacking Federalists and clergymen.⁶⁶

The first reaction to the advent of open infidelity on the American scene was sheer panic, Dr. Marty declared. The New England Federalist clergy immediately joined with Jedidiah Morse to stop the evil from spreading. They all united to denounce Thomas Jefferson, the French Revolution and the new ideas on reason and liberty.⁶⁷

However, Marty continued, the panic ceased and the religious leaders soon realized the strength and sentiment behind their position. The ultimate reaction was revivals held throughout the new republic, causing churches to come out of the decade numerically stronger. Therefore, the reaction that Thomas Paine and other freethinkers wanted never came to pass and the opposite occurred, the established churches grew stronger and multiplied as they had never done before.⁶⁸

Professor Mark O. Kistler, of Michigan State University, published an article entitled, "German-American Liberalism and Thomas Paine," in the American Quarterly in 1962.

It was the author's contention to disclose the great influence which German-Americans had on the resurrection and reevaluation of Thomas Paine in the last half of the nineteenth century. In Kistler's estimation, the German-Americans, known as the Forty-Eighters, adopted Thomas Paine as their spiritual idol and in turn aroused the interest of Moncure Conway to write his famous biography.⁶⁹

The Forty-Eighters, refugees from the unsuccessful movement for the unification of Germany in 1848, championed a cosmopolitan humanitarianism based on natural law and were spiritually and ideologically in agreement with eighteenth-century rationalism. With this heritage and propensity, it was not strange that they were receptive to the writings of Thomas Paine. They had first become acquainted with the works of Paine while in Germany and it was the Age of Reason that made the most tremendous impression upon them. This particular work was later destined to become the Bible of the Forty-Eighters after their immigration to the United States.⁷⁰

Professor Kistler argued that because of the climate of continual religious controversy in Germany, "the Bible and church dogma were not considered infallible."⁷¹ Eighteenth-century deism and classical humanism had conditioned the German mind, and so Thomas Paine's "liberal Christianity" was not shocking in the least.⁷²

After the Revolution of 1848, the exiles came to America and many settled in Cincinnati, Ohio. It was here that Moncure Conway came as a pastor of the First Universalist Church. He became fascinated with the religious ideas of the German liberal clubs and while attending their meetings, he was first introduced to Thomas Paine as the instrument in promulgating rationalism and religious freedom in revolutionary America.⁷³ From this seed planted in the heart of Moncure Conway, some thirty years later its full realization came to pass when a biography and compilation of the works of Paine were published.

In his conclusion, Dr. Kistler reiterated his original premise in this summary:

. . . in brief retrospect, the immigrant Germans--over a span of fifty years--adopted Paine as a spiritual forebear and contributed to resurrecting his name. By striving to perpetuate the ideas of the colonial writer, German-Americans helped to create a more tolerant and enlightened atmosphere in nineteenth-century America.⁷⁴

Sidney Warren wrote one of the last studies on the history of the freethought movement in America. Warren, a freethinker himself, was concerned with presenting a complete resume of the life, career and thought of Robert Green Ingersoll. He could not, however, discuss Ingersoll without some pertinent comment on Thomas Paine and the Age of Reason. The following remark was one of the most interesting that Mr. Warren had to make about Thomas Paine:

If the Christian religion had its Christ, the Jewish religion its Moses, and the Mohammedan religion its Mohammed, the "religion" of unbelief in America, too, had its prophet.⁷⁵

It was the Age of Reason, maintained Warren, that set Paine up in the unrivalled position of the patron saint of the freethought movement, and his work became its bible.⁷⁶ By the last quarter of the nineteenth century a new evaluation of Thomas Paine took place and a new attitude of toleration and praise for the great service he had contributed to America were voiced. These "new views of Thomas Paine were symptomatic of American development."⁷⁷ As the people began to realize the importance of democratic principles and their heritage, they began also to discover the meritorious contribution made by Paine to the American democratic system. Thomas Paine was placed in a new perspective and his activities came to be regarded "as a constructive and beneficial phase in the history of mankind."⁷⁸

In a highly acclaimed study, Religion and the American Mind, Professor Alan Heimert of Harvard University attempted to define and analyze two streams of thought--evangelical and rational--and their influence as "traced in the life of the mind in America, and its politics."⁷⁹

In his investigation Heimert discovered, as he traced the development of Evangelical Protestantism after the Great Awakening and the counterbalancing, humane and progressive brand of American rationalism prior to the Revolution, that a synthesis, a liberal spirit, had evolved to condition the American mind for eventual separation and independence. This liberalism, however, had to be defined and properly

understood and thus Dr. Heimert explained his thesis in the following statement:

It is my conclusion, however, that Liberalism was profoundly conservative, politically as well as socially, and that its leaders, insofar as they did in fact embrace the Revolution, were the most reluctant of rebels. Conversely, "evangelical" religion, which had as its most notable formal expression the "Calvinism" of Jonathan Edwards, was not the retrograde philosophy that many historians rejoice to see confounded in America's Age of Reason. Rather Calvinism, and Edwards, provided pre-Revolutionary America with a radical, even democratic, social and political ideology, and evangelical religion embodied, and inspired, a thrust toward American nationalism.⁸⁰

Professor Heimert presented convincing evidence to substantiate his claim that in America religion played a monumental role and that the ramifications of religious principles and practices were felt in almost all areas of eighteenth-century American thought and activity. If this is the case, it perhaps makes it a little easier to understand why Thomas Paine's general popularity and influence was so brief and tenuous in America. His Common Sense, supported by constant Scriptural reference, appealed to the American spiritual consciousness that it was indeed Divine Providence that a complete separation take place and independence be achieved. However, when Paine returned to the United States in 1802 he experienced no hero's welcome by the majority of the citizenry. The explanation that the majority of the biographers and critics have suggested was that his deist treatise, Age of Reason, had provoked American wrath and soon he was labeled America's foremost infidel. The United States was, since the 1790's, in the midst of a Second Great Awakening and this did not help Paine's situation.

Professor Russel Blaine Nye would suggest a slightly more practical explanation for the demise of Paine's respectability. "Deism's

popularity was brief and confined to a relatively small minority of American intellectual leaders," maintained Nye.⁸¹ The reasons for this brief popularity, even after the Age of Reason, the author suggested, were that deism offered "no creed, no church organization, no missions, no preachers other than its militant pamphleteers, and a limited appeal to the common man."⁸² Professor Nye summarized his discussion of the demise of deism with a quotation from a speech made by President Philip Lindsley of the University of Nashville in 1830, "the reign of atheism has passed away, and the fopperies of infidelity are no longer in fashion."⁸³

Nearly all of Thomas Paine's biographers and critics agree that his Age of Reason adversely affected his reputation and public image in America and Britain. Whether Paine's unpopularity had already begun with the publishing of his Rights of Man, as R. R. Palmer and Frank Smith propose, is difficult to determine. If the Age of Reason was the true culprit, then John Dos Passos granted food for thought when he suggested that if Thomas Paine had written his Age of Reason in a scholarly manner, "in the small print of theological debate," he might have been tolerated. Instead, he wrote to the masses and they read him, and the "only protection British and American churchly institutions had was to turn Paine into the devil himself."⁸⁴

If one cannot agree with Dos Passos, there are certainly numerous other interpretations by theologians, historians and free-thinkers to investigate. One fact remains that the Revolutionary Hero of 1776, Thomas Paine, returned to his adopted America and the

majority opinion labeled him "a lying, drunken infidel," "a drunken atheist and scavenger of fashion."⁸⁵ It seems quite evident that this tired and ill old man could never be tolerated or separated from the words he had penned to destroy traditionalism and establish his ideal, "the new birthday of the world."

NOTES

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- ⁴ W. E. Woodward, "Tom Paine," American Mercury, 61 (1945), 78.
- ⁵ David F. Hawke, Paine, p. 293.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ R. R. Palmer, "The Rights of Man," p. 172.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Frank Smith, Thomas Paine, Liberator, p. 271.
- ¹⁰ See note 15. Michael L. Lasser, "In Response to The Age of Reason, 1794-1799," Bulletin of Bibliography, 25 (January, 1967), 43.
- ¹¹ R. Watson, An Apology for the Bible (New York: Hunt & Easton, n.d.), p. 9.
- ¹² Ibid., p. 10.
- ¹³ Alfred Owen Aldridge, Man of Reason, p. 234.
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- ¹⁹ Aldridge, p. 235.
- ²⁰ Uzal Ogden, Antidote to Deism or the Deists Unmasked (Newark, N. J.: John Woods, 1795), pp. vi-vii.
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CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

During the time period set aside for researching source materials for this study, a sincere effort was made to locate and examine sources outside of the profusion of American and British documents which could be incorporated into the main body of this thesis. After sufficient investigation, in the opinion of this annotator, the exceedingly limited amount of available materials offered no additional information or fresh interpretation to Paine scholarship. It was, therefore, determined that American and British studies would be used exclusively in the presentation of an historiographical account of the treatment of Thomas Paine by biographers and critics.

The main purpose of this interpretive study was to attempt to present an in depth annotated bibliography of the studies of Thomas Paine by biographers, historians and critics. If, in the process of examining the enormous number of sources, a significant pattern or trend in treatment appeared, this would also be discussed and analyzed.

Thomas Paine was a controversial character and many of the first biographical attempts were equally disputatious. Evidence of a standard appraisal or a model approach to the subject never developed. The key to a comprehensive overview of the Thomas Paine, as depicted by biographers and critics, was highly individualistic interpretation. No two writers portrayed him in precisely the same manner.

Perhaps, the only standard point of agreement was the general acknowledgment that Paine possessed a gift of rhetoric and a way of expressing himself in words that reached the masses.

Within the obvious personalization expressed by Paine's biographers and critics, who at times revealed a definite "sense of mission" either to destroy or exonerate his memory, certain trends became evident that support the premise that they have portrayed Thomas Paine, his character, thought and influence, in the complexion relative to their own environment, experiences and personal prejudices. For example, although scholars and critics disagree as to whether Paine's loss of effectiveness and virtual ostracism were due to the reaction to his political treatise, The Rights of Man, or the attack on Christian orthodoxy in The Age of Reason, it is important to note the fact that the most vehement attacks against Paine occurred while evangelical revival and restoration of political conservatism were in full force in America and Great Britain. Consequently, in the short span of six years, 1794-1799, there were thirty-seven ardent responses to Thomas Paine's declaration of war against the Bible as Holy Scripture, as expressed in his Age of Reason. During this same period, through 1820, the most extreme anti-Paine biographies were published. From 1821 through 1891 only two biographies came off the presses and both were published in the early 1840's. In 1892 Moncure Daniel Conway's Life of Thomas Paine and the subsequent publishing of his major works served to help lift the stigma of disgrace and infamy from Paine's name. The climate for a reconsideration of Thomas Paine and his contributions had been created by a movement toward liberal theology

begun in the late nineteenth century. The significant consequence of this new liberalism in the realm of religious thought was that seminaries and churches everywhere were introduced to the world of modern science, philosophy and comparative religion. New support for theological skepticism and agnosticism developed and, in due time, Thomas Paine and his writings were reconsidered in the light of the new rationalism.

The twentieth century witnessed a marked increase in the number of biographies, biographical sketches and critical studies of Thomas Paine authored by scholars in many academic fields. As the century progressed and Paine's political, social and religious philosophy emerged as rather mild and almost conservative when illuminated by modern technology and rational inquiry, correspondingly, objectivity noticeably increased within the more recent treatments. Occasionally, an extremely partisan biography or essay would be published, usually by an individual who had discovered Paine to be a kindred rebel spirit politically or theologically speaking. In the main, however, it may be suggested that objectivity in Paine studies seems to be in direct correlation to the loss of controversy in his thought as expressed in his major writings. Stated in simplistic terms, Thomas Paine's eighteenth-century political, social and religious radicalism no longer exists as a source of common anxiety or annoyance for the majority of people. Today, only the staunch political reactionary or the most devout fundamentalist would be highly incensed by reading The Rights of Man or The Age of Reason. This investigator, however, can testify as to

the difficulty of maintaining an unbiased approach and an open mind when dealing with Thomas Paine, even when it is through the eyes of his biographers and critics.

APPENDIX



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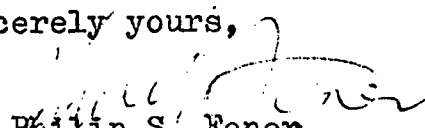
February 16, 1976

Ms. Francina K. Hail
8810 James N.E.
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87111

Dear Ms. Hail:

Thank you for your letter of February 12. In general if I were to rewrite my work on Paine I would put more stress on his limitations as a radical in the period on the eve of the American Revolution with respect to the position advanced by the more radical forces in the Revolutionary camp, represented by the militia of Pennsylvania and the artisans, mechanics, and seamen in the camp. I would not overdo this point but would indicate Paine's more limited approach to issues of property rights than those in the more radical camp. I also would have more clearly set forth some of his limitations in his approach to the French Revolution. But in the main apart from these two points, I would if anything have indicated a greater respect for Paine's place in the Democratic tradition than I did when I wrote on him in the two volumes I published in the 1940's. Are you familiar with my piece on Paine in the current Encyclopaedia Britannica? I am also enclosing a small piece on Paine which you might find interesting.

Sincerely yours,


Philip S. Foner
Professor of History

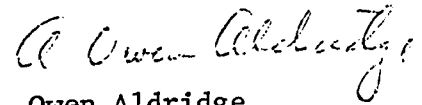
February 18, 1976

Ms. Francina K. Hail
8810 James N.E.
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87111

Dear Ms. Hail:

I am pleased to answer your query concerning my thoughts or attitude toward Paine. I am reasonably sure that if I had the opportunity of rewriting my biography at the present time that I would change practically nothing. The only new evidence of unusual significance which has come to light since that time consists of the identification of the Abbé Morellet as his contact with the archbishop of Toulouse. You will find my commentary on this matter on page 114 of the enclosed article. It will appear soon in the publication Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century.

Sincerely yours,



A. Owen Aldridge

AOA:emk
Enc.

61 Liberty St.
Madison, Conn. 06443
20 March 1976

Dear Miss Hail:

Your letter has just reached me, thus this delayed answer.

It is hard to say how my thoughts and attitudes changed toward Paine. I began my study with the standard view of the man -- a radical who stirred up two revolutions and tried hard to create a third in England. I came away convinced he was less a radical than I once thought -- that is, he tended to react much more than I'd expected to events. His ideas on the American Revolution reflected those of the circle he moved within here. His ideas on the French Revolution reflected those of the circles he moved in there. His Age of Reason, which Americans judged blasphemous, was not seen that way by his acquaintances in Paris, the city where he wrote it.

Your second question is easier to answer. Once done with a book I tend to push it out of my mind and concentrate on whatever new project is in hand. I have not kept up with the scholarly work done since my biography was published and thus have not been influenced to change my opinions. I have not, for example, read Foner's work. It is likely that if I had I would want to alter some of my judgments.

A question you did not ask but might be pertinent to your study is this: What did I omit from my book that I wished I had found a way to include? Well, I strongly believe that all the basic ideas and much of the fury in Common Sense stemmed from Benjamin Franklin. Paine, it seems to me, had no personal reason to hate the king but Franklin had recently returned home full of rancor for George. Franklin favored a single assembly in the new governments soon to be erected in America. Paine, though he had no knowledge of or experience with such a form of government, also did. But I said little of this because I could dredge up no evidence to make the point.

I hope these remarks are of some use to you. If you have other questions, I'll do my best to answer them.

Best wishes,

David F. Hawke

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE TO BIBLIOGRAPHY

At first glance the organization of this bibliography appears to be rather strange, for biographies, which are normally considered secondary sources, are in this case listed under the heading of primary sources.

Due to the nature of this interpretive study and since in depth analyses of the treatment of Thomas Paine by his biographers was of major importance, the author judged the biographies to be more accurately considered as primary source materials.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

The Rev. Francina Kercheville Hail was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on November 12, 1934, the daughter of Dr. Francis M. and Christina J. Kercheville. She graduated from Highland High School in 1952 and received from the University of New Mexico a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1956, Master of Arts degree in 1959, and a Ph.D. in history in 1977. The Rev. Dr. Hail holds a secondary teaching certificate and taught eight and one-half years in the Albuquerque Public Schools System before returning to the University of New Mexico to complete her doctorate. She is also a Minister of the Gospel and is the first such woman to be ordained in the State of New Mexico.